

SPORTS AND  
ANECDOTES

C. T. S. BIRCH REYNARDSON



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## SPORTS AND ANECDOTES

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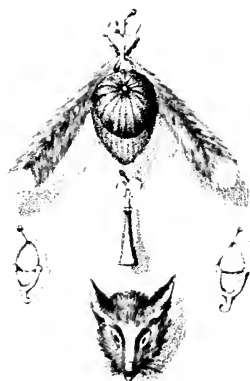






*Frontispiece.*

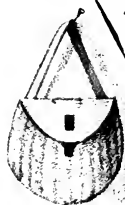
Meet of the Cottesmore at Woodwell Head in 1826.



# SPORTS & ANECDOTES OF BYGONE DAYS

by  
C. T. S. Birch Reynardson

author of  
"Down the Road"



Illustrated.

LONDON: CHAPMAN & HALL, LIMITED.

1887.





Dedicated

TO THE

MODERN BRITISH SPORTSMAN

TO THOSE WHO LOVE,

AS I HAVE LOVED IN TIMES LONG PAST AND GONE,

SPORTS OF VARIOUS KINDS.



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SPORTS AND ANECDOTES





# SPORTS AND ANECDOTES.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE great and very flattering success which has attended the publication of my humble production, *Down the Road ; or, Reminiscences of a Gentleman Coachman*, induces me to believe that it has not been entirely without interest to the young coaching British public, to those chips of the old block, for whose amusement it was compiled.

The very flattering and indulgent way in which it was reviewed in most of the papers and journals of any note, has, what is called, "set my hackles up," and, like an old game cock, whose deeds of pluck and daring are so much condemned in these degenerate days, I feel inclined to crow and go at it again ; and, like *Oliver Twist*, of voracious appetite, though I ought to be satisfied with what has

been so liberally bestowed upon me, and the kind treatment I have received from all quarters, I feel tempted to ask for more. And thus, most kind and, to my notions, easily to be pleased British public, I shall again offer to your indulgent notice a few anecdotes, sayings, and doings, which have come under my own notice, and, many of them having happened to myself, whether they may appear to you interesting and amusing, or not, recall vividly to me things that have taken place and passed away during a long and somewhat eventful life.

With your permission, then, I will begin by telling you what manner of man I am, or rather, have been. *Non sum qualis eram*, I am constrained to admit; but how can it be otherwise, for years have rolled on *cito pede*, as the Poet says—yes, with incredible velocity, as it seems to me.

I was born, good reader, so long ago as Anno Domini 1810, in camp near Colchester, where my Father was then quartered with the 16th Light Dragoons, now 16th Lancers. On the 10th November, 1810, I first drew my breath, and was born with both eyes open, as I am told, and having kept them pretty wide open ever since that memorable time, and having been, as they tell me, pretty wide awake for more

than seventy-five years, and as, up to the present time, I have never been obliged to wear spectacles, or even clearers, either to read or write, and for which blessing I trust I am sufficiently thankful, I have heard and seen and done many queer things both by land and water, which, in due course and with your kind permission, I shall attempt to describe, if not to edification, I trust it may be for your amusement. The greater number of my cotemporaries who were at Eton with me, and who remember me as a youth upon a pair of young and active legs, my body and carriage as straight as a fishing rod, and the sum total of me as full of mischief as a tree full of monkeys, are, in 1886, but few and far between. Many have gone from this land, I trust, to a better; at all events, they have passed away from amongst us, and those few who do remain are, for the most part, like myself, I fear, considered old fogies, with their grey hairs, and grandchildren around them, and bearing the indelible stamp of Anno Domini upon their grizzly beards and rounded shoulders.

Those who were not born in the remote period I have spoken of, I believe, from seeing me, to use a coaching term, with a "wheel up," for I have been lame from an accident for more than sixty years,

consider that I was "dropped at nurse when a baby," which, we all know, is the mild term for having been born a cripple. I will refer you, good reader, to *Down the Road; or, Reminiscences of a Gentleman Coachman*, published by Longmans and Co., for the real state of the case. I may, however, just say that from the day I was born till the age of nineteen I was in the possession of as good a pair of legs as other people, and, as a Yankee would say, "I guess I could swim as far, dive as deep, and come up as dry as any other fellow." As soon as I was old enough to attempt any kind of equitation, I was put upon a rocking horse; from that wooden affair I was put upon a donkey, who used to make a point of kicking me off three or four times a day; I was then promoted to a pony, with merely a sheep skin and a surcingle round it; then to a saddle and stirrups; and, ultimately, to one of my Father's hunters, with white cord breeches, top boots, and a swallow-tailed red coat. My Father kept a good stud of light-weight horses, encouraged my riding in every way, and never was better pleased than to see me going well. I was generally well mounted, as light as six penny-worth of halfpence, certainly not much heavier than a good fat Norfolk cock turkey. My motto was,



*Gaudet equis canibusque.* My heart was in the right place, and I could generally hold my own across a country with the best of 'em. I was taught to consider hunting a noble science, and to this day, though debarred by my accident from joining in the chase, I still love the sight of a red coat, the sound of the hounds and the horn, and I am not a little proud to think that I can show as many foxes as any man.

At the early age of twenty I became a confirmed cripple, and from the fact of my hip-bone having become fixed in the socket, or, what a medical authority would call, "anchylosed," I have never since been able to get upon a horse. It has been, I own, a sad privation, but matters might have been worse; and I feel thankful that I have been able to enjoy other sports, and that, though forbidden the pig-skin, I have been able to drive coaches, shoot, and fish in a moderate way, and enjoy many amusements which did not require that I should be actually on the top of a horse.

Having thus given a slight outline of myself and the habits I have been able and much given to indulge in, I shall proceed to relate a few anecdotes and sporting events which have either occurred

to myself or come under my immediate notice in this and other countries. Begging my readers to divest themselves entirely of the idea that I aim at any kind of eloquence, fine language, or literary art, and begging their kind patience and indulgence toward any of my shortcomings, I will take them to the haunts of birds, beasts, and fishes, in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and the sunny Italy.

## CHAPTER I.

“THE COTTESMORE IN 1826.”

*The hounds all make a jovial cry ;*

*The hounds all make a jovial cry ;*

*The hunstman winds his horn.*

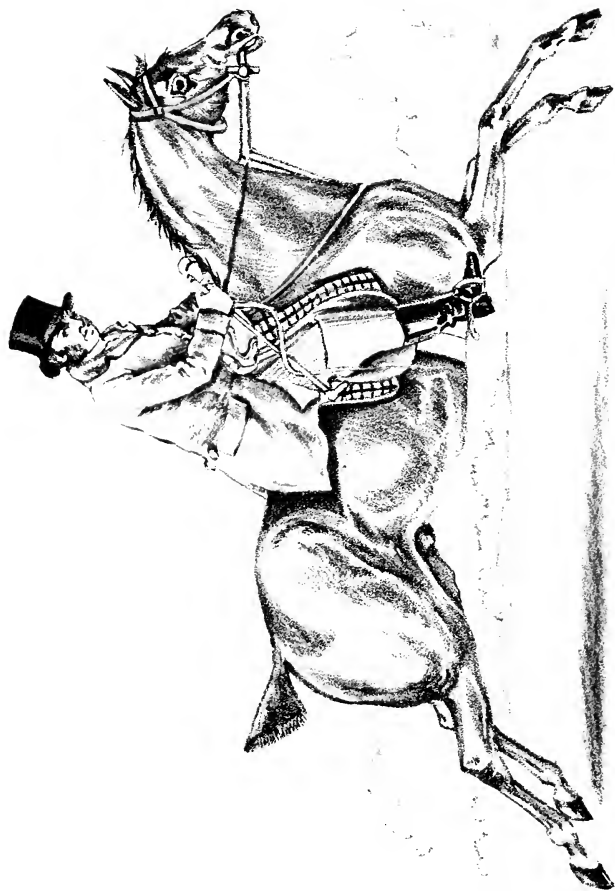
TIME flies fast, good reader, and it is now many years since I was little, when the only steam came from the kettle ; for I may say, there was little or no steam in the days I refer to, except for the purpose of making tea, mixing “hot stopping,” washing, and for those who were arrived at manhood to shave with. They were, however, I really think, what are called “good old days” ; and there was much fun afloat, though, perhaps, in a milder form than at present. There was, however, as much dash and pluck in the Britisher then as in these days, for, wherever there was danger, there would he be found, and he was wont to shoot his enemy with a “Brown Bess” or “Flint and Steel,” and could drive

all before him at the point of the bayonet, and poke his adversary in the stomach, and stir up his abdominal viscera with a foot and a half of cold steel, or enjoy his coffee and pistols for two, and slugs in a saw pit, with a *sang froid* which cannot be surpassed even in these fast days, and the long range of the Henry-Martini rifle. That the generality of sports and pastimes had more *real* pleasure in those days I have little doubt.

The man who killed his fifty, or thirty, or I may say even the humbler bag of twenty brace of partridges over a brace of good pointers with his old "Joe Manton" flint and steel gun laid his head on his pillow at night more composed in mind than the man of the present day who shoots with his two or three breechloaders and is never satisfied unless he has been constantly on the present all day long and has killed more birds than any one else of the party. Such was also the case with hunting; and it is my sincere belief that more *real* fun was often got out of *one* horse in olden times than many in the present day get out of two or even three.

You would no doubt laugh, not in your sleeve, but right out, if you could see a meet of the





*To face page 2.*

LORD ALVANLEY.

Cottesmore hounds at say Woodwell Head or Little Dalby under the old *régime*, Anno Domini 1826, or about that remote period.

At either of the aforesaid places you would have seen the *élite* of Melton, the Melton men as they were and are still called. You would have seen the pick of England, amongst whom were such men as Lord Clanwilliam, John Moore, Sir Jas. Musgrave, Sir Francis Burdett, Gilmore, Val Marr, Lord Chesterfield, Frank Forester, Lord Wilton, Maxse, Horatio Ross, Lord Kennedy, Charlie Wyndham, Otway Cave, and Lord Albanley, who, in his way, was rather a character, as for many years he wore the most monstrous pair of boots that perhaps ever were seen on any man's legs. When first I remember him he wore ordinary top boots; but, to the wonder and admiration of all beholders, he appeared one day clad in a pair of boots with the tops standing high above his knees, and much in the form of the old Life Guards' boots with the corners rounded off. It was always supposed by many that it was an invention of his own; but this was not so, as he took the hint from *one* boot that the Father of the present Duke of Rutland had had made, and which he wore on his

left leg to protect his knee which he had previously hurt by running a thorn into it. And I remember him giving my Father and myself a description of this accident, which had caused him much pain, and showing off the advantages of his boot as we stood by a gate in Pickworth Wood. The boot, as a protection to the injured knee, seemed to answer well enough, but it was never intended for any other purpose.

Lord Alvanley, having taken the tip from the boot worn by the Duke of Rutland to protect his injured knee, thought that he might as well protect his knees from the thorns encountered in the *bullfinches* that everywhere predominated in those days, and accordingly he set up a pair made upon the same principle.

Where there was one hedge that you could see over there were a dozen that you could not see through, and as the fields were much smaller than they are in these days, the everlastingly thrusting through these obstacles was a roughish business; for many of the said hedges, from being six, seven, or eight feet high, and so thick that you could hardly see through them, were bad to face, and jumping them was out of the question, and a light



weight had often some difficulty in getting through them at all; and, unless he could find a soft place that had been made by some friendly bullocks, or a rail that had been put in to mend some gap, and was of the *barleysugar* order, and like it pretty brittle, it was a serious matter to bore a hole to get through. There were two or three heavy men whom one was glad to see out on such occasions, and who, if on a horse that was used to the kind of thing, could shove through almost anything. Amongst the best for such work was that hardest of all hard fellows, Tom Smith or Ashton Smith; no tenpenny nail that was ever forged could be harder. He used to ride a brown horse with a tanned muzzle that was as hard as his master, and would cram through anywhere if he could only see daylight on the other side; and if he could only get his nose in, he would lay his ears back, and make all crack again till he was through, and then the hedge would close behind him and he was seen no more. Lord Alvanley's boots were a grand invention for going through these hairy places; but he found them not so comfortable as he expected, for the hedges being in many instances very dry, the rotten pieces, many of which were composed of thorns,

would break off short and insinuate themselves into his boots, and getting over the standing-up tops, and so working their way down till they were as far as the calves of his legs, where they became, as it were, jammed, and this produced a most unpleasant sensation, and an irritation which was anything but agreeable, and this fact was the only thing against them, except their unsightly appearance, that I ever heard of.

They would ride up to the meet in their white cord breeches, with either what were called mud boots or spatterdashes, to keep their boots free from mud, swallow-tailed coats (no one wore cut-aways in those days), and tall chimney-pot hats, which had as much nap on them as there is wool on many a Southdown sheep's back, and which were much in the shape of a garden pot—regular chimney-pots. The said hats were wonderful to behold, not only from their height and shape, but also for their marvellous discomfort, for when they got wet through they became as soft as tripe, as heavy as if they had been made of sheet lead; and a mixture of something after the manner of gum or glue would trickle down one's face and neck to one's endless discomfort; and they took a deal of

drying and ironing with a hot iron to get them into any kind of shape again. The hat of those days was very unlike the light silk affair that we cover our brains with in these days ; but in spite of this the servants of the Cottesmore hunt preferred them to caps, and were always allowed to wear hats, making an excuse that with caps the rain got down their necks. When first I remember them they wore caps, but later on they wore hats. I never thought it looked workmanlike, but I dare say it was an improvement on the cap in respect of actual comfort. For the information of those who were not born yesterday, a short description of the mud boot may be edifying. It was a large roomy kind of legging, made of either drab cloth or fustian, with a foot to it and leather sole which took in the boot ; it came up to the middle of the thigh, was held up by a strap of the same material, of either brown cloth or fustian, and it had a cleverly contrived hole in the back of the heel to let the spur come through ; the whole was secured to the owner's leg by a row of buttons too numerous to be described.

As soon as the master got off his hack his servant came to his assistance and unbuttoned his

mud boots ; his master then got on his hunter, and there he was mounted and eager for the fray.

As a general rule every one rode to covert, and many a man who had not a very long distance to go to covert was not too grand to ride his own horse. Dogcarts and such conveyances were unknown ; and if by chance one saw a man arrive at the meet in a jingle or post-chaise, with straw at the bottom, which that obsolete conveyance actually used to have, one set him down at once either for a very heavy swell of some kind, or a Melton man, who were usually a cut above all other men in being luxurious in their notions. No man, in the days I am speaking of, used to have a servant following him with half a hundredweight of sandwiches and half a butt of sherry. A small packet of sandwiches or a few ginger-bread nuts in the pocket of his swallow-tailed coat was all he required. I remember a sporting parson, who had his servant following him, with a brown leather case containing sandwiches and sherry strapped round his waist, and he at once got the name of the Licensed Victualler. However, these were pristine notions, and in 1826 the notions of things differed from those of 1886.

But we have arrived at the meet, and have mounted our horses, an old stamp of animal, with a square-cut tail, and what would seem in these days an altogether antiquated-looking kind of "gee," but he is full of beans and fit to go; he has short legs, and his square-cut short tail displays his rounded quarters to advantage; he has more timber about him than is generally seen in these days of thoroughbred, weedy animals, who owe their good coats to hot water and Turkish baths more than to the use of strap-oil and elbow-grease. The plot thickens as red-coat after red-coat comes up and exchanges greetings; and the Melton men, many of whom are great dandies, are almost refulgent in their white cords, white buckskin gloves, and well-brushed hats, for their grooms have given them a tickle-up for the occasion; their well-polished boots have also had a lick-over, where any spot of mud chanced to appear; in fact, they are the beau-ideal of a good turn-out, and, in spite of having ridden from Melton in mud boots, look, at least the greater part of them, as if they had just come out of a band-box. White buckskin gloves seem unknown in these days, and very few lazy gentlemen's gentlemen would know how, or condescend, to turn them out properly, and would most probably give their masters notice on

the spot if they were expected to produce them, in addition to their buckskin breeches. Depend upon it, they were the smart thing, and the present dirty old tanned glove, which is so much worn by both masters and men, is the unsmart thing. Only imagine a huntsman or whip, a coachman or groom, a footman, or even second footman, appearing on duty in those days in shilling dogskin gloves, or the footman on a well-appointed carriage in anything but top-boots and milk-white buckskin gloves; and thus equipped he would travel by the side of the lady's maid, in the rumble or dickey, behind the carriage from London to York, and even further, perhaps to Scotland, without thinking it a hardship, the lady's maid of those days knowing nothing of the inside of a carriage by the side of her mistress, and the footman never having heard of a railroad, and going inside a second-class, with foot-warmers, padded seat, and a lamp to read his newspaper or novel by, and drinking his glass of pale sherry at many of the stations.

Such were the habits of olden days, and they were, in my idea, to be commended, as far as appearance went.

The hounds have arrived on the scene, with old George Slack as huntsman, Jack Lambert as first

whip, and Jack Abbey as second whip ; and, punctual to the moment, also arrive Lord and Lady Lonsdale, and Lady Frederick Bentinck, in their red habits, and Colonel Lowther, sitting on his horse as if he and his horse had been cast in the same mould. No finer horseman ever was. He looked the workman he was, with a fine seat, good hand, never out of temper with his horse, but determined at all times to be master of him : no bluster or bad word ever escaped his mouth. He was considered a somewhat reserved man, but his heart was in the right place, and a kinder one never beat under a red coat. There was no appearance of jealousy, or always wishing to be first : but, somehow, he always managed to be in that enviable position, and if any serious work was to be done, it was Colonel Lowther that could generally cut it out. Above all things that used to charm me was his invariable kindness to youngsters, to whom he would always say a kind word or lend a helping hand, provided they were of the right sort, did not override the hounds, and went straight. But how shall I describe Lord Lonsdale, and the two ladies in their red riding-habits, or do any kind of justice to their worth and the high esteem in which they were held by every one, I believe I may say,

without exception? Any description I can give will I feel sure fall very far short to set forth in a sufficiently strong way the respect and love in which they were held for their universally kind and gentle manners. Without any kind of ostentation, they were dignified; though high-born themselves, they were affable and courteous to those below them; and the kindly greetings of the good old Earl (who died in 1844) and the two ladies in their red habits, as they rode up to where old George Slack and his hounds were awaiting their arrival, will long be remembered by all those who had the honour and privilege of their acquaintance, should any such be still remaining. I will then only remark that Lord Lonsdale was a type of "The fine old English gentleman, One of the olden time," and that his wife and daughter were the worthy wife and daughter, in all their ways, thoughts, and deeds, of so worthy a husband and father. It is now long since they have disappeared from amongst us, but from having in former days had the great pleasure and privilege of knowing them intimately, and from having as a youngster received invariable kindness from them all, I cannot refrain from expressing my affectionate feelings towards them, and paying in very feeble terms



my tribute of regard and respect for the memory of those from whom in younger and happier years I have at all times received so much kindness. Greetings and small-talk, and the coffee-house part of the business being over, we proceed to the real business of the day, and at a word from the noble Master, Slack and his hounds move on to draw Woodwell Head, a covert too well known to all hunting men to require any comment or description from my humble pen ; as it was then, so it is now, I hear, a certain find, and doubtless the fame of Woodwell Head will live for ever. With a wave of his hand, the hounds are in the noted covert, and set to work to draw in earnest. Old Slack, holding his reins and whip in his left hand, sets his right arm akimbo, as was his invariable custom, and for a minute or two his melodious voice is heard, as he rides slowly up the riding, drawing this well-known covert. I say melodious voice, because any one who was alive in those now remote days will bear me out in saying that it was the most musical voice that ever was heard produced by the throat of a huntsman. There may have been as fine voices as his, but I never heard one, and when he set his arm akimbo and had cleared his throat with a couple of hems, the tones

that he brought forth would have been fit to lead a choir with.

But there is soon other music to be heard, and the wood resounds with the music produced by Jack Lambert, not a soft, melodious voice like that of Slack, but a screech that only Lambert could produce, as he views the fox across the bottom of the riding. He was as famous for his view holloa as Slack was for his soft musical voice ; both were quite first-rate in their way, and both were sweet to hear, but they differed from each other in sweetness. Lambert having thus given the key-note, the whole orchestra is soon in tune : first one hound produces a note, then another, till the whole pack are well together, and produce such a crash of music as is not to be heard even at the opera house—sweet melody indeed, and such as nothing but a pack of hounds can produce. Talkers leave off talking, and, intent upon more important business, hurry off to where Lambert has viewed the fox away. There is a general scurry and crash, and a decided inclination amongst some of the Melton men, who are as keen as Durham mustard, to be a little too keen. Old Slack is soon out of the wood, and, with a polite touch of his hat and in the civilest possible way,

administers a slight rebuke : " Hold hard, gentlemen ; please hold hard—please hold hard, gentlemen, and let the hounds get out." In the days I am speaking of there was a kind of honour amongst thieves, and though many a man was ready to ride over the hounds, or his neighbour, and over anything he ought not, the greater part of those who hunted had, I think, more of the real sportsman in them than they have in these days ; and from this cause a man was hardly permitted by the rest of the field to spoil his own sport and the sport of others, and put the temper of the Master of the hounds and his huntsman and even whips to the severe test it is often done in the present generation.

But amongst all the goodly company, with their souls on fire and eager for the fray, there is no one that appears more bent upon mischief than a certain dapper little man in black. He is faultlessly got up in all respects ; his hat shining like satin, his white cord breeches particularly well cut and fitting without a wrinkle below the knees, where they are tied in a most artistic manner by a white leather bow, so faultless in its sit that nothing but the actual sight of it could describe the pains that must have been taken to achieve such perfection.

But all this is nearly eclipsed by the white choker that encompasses his neck, which is as white as driven snow, about four inches deep, starched to the consistency of pasteboard, and folded across in front with a simple small round jet pin, like a bead on a gold stem, all plain and without any device or ornament whatever. This is surmounted by a pair of well-starched, milky-white, fine stan'-up collars. The choker seems as if it would choke him, and the stan'-up collars seem to bid fair to cut his ears off. He looks all over what he is, as keen and sharp as a razor. This is no less a dignitary than one of the famous hunting parsons in the shires; a capital fellow he is, too, and popular with all; but he is a thrusting kind of chap, and almost too much so when he gets a bit excited, which he is on the present occasion. For, spick and span as he turns out, he has ridden six or seven miles to the meet, or rather the covert that he felt sure they would draw. He has performed a marriage and a christening before he left home, and he has a funeral at three o'clock, which he will probably have to hurry home a good deal for, and which he will possibly attend in his surplice and top-boots, having forgotten in his haste to take his spurs off. This I

have myself known to happen. He is very keen and rides like a dragoon. His horse, like the horses of most hunting parsons, is a good one; will jump a factory if called upon, and the *tout ensemble* is neat as paint and full of go. He is one of the most unruly of the company, and knowing that he must be at home for his funeral at three, and that his work after hunting is ready cut out for him, he wishes to make the most of things, and seems inclined to ride after the fox. Colonel Lowther, however, does not seem to see the matter in the same light he does, and, without blustering at him or using any unseemly language, simply reminds him that, fast as he is, he is not fast enough to catch the fox, and rebukes him mildly and sarcastically in the following terms: “Do hold hard, Mr. ——; do, pray, hold hard. You’re very fast, we all know, but not quite fast enough to catch him without the hounds; you’ll have an opportunity of showing your speed before the day is out, and you may want it all before you go home. Do, pray, hold hard, and let the hounds get out.” Both Lord Lonsdale and Colonel Lowther could, if required, say a quietly cutting thing, but I never heard an oath or coarse word come out of the mouth of either, however severely their tempers may have been

called upon, and I have often thought of the following story, which shows how contrary a Master of hounds sometimes acts when he has been sore pressed and has allowed his temper to run away with him. The following I had many years since from a gentleman who saw the proceedings and heard the benediction then pronounced.

A gentleman who shall be nameless, and who kept a very good pack of harriers, and who withal was not blessed with the best of tempers, being a good deal riled on one memorable occasion, lost his presence of mind more than usual. He was a thick-set, I may almost say a fat man, with a short neck, a red face, a hot temper, and much given to having the asthma, or some such complaint, which caused his bellows at times to be much out of order. One day, when out with his hounds, he had suffered a good deal of provocation from their being much overridden. It so happened that, from a bridle gate in the corner of a field being locked, many of the unruly gentlemen who caused him so much annoyance got what is called "pounded." This opportunity was too good to be lost, so galloping up to them, as well as he could, puffing with fat, and the broken bellows that his asthma

caused, he accosted them with the following benediction—" Gentlemen "—then a long breath—" Gentlemen "—then another—" Gentlemen "—then a real long breath, and by which he gave vent to his feelings—" May you all be d——d, may you all be d——d, gentlemen, and *particularly* you, old Mr. ——," addressing an old parson who had but little to do with overriding the hounds, for he was rather a quiet inoffensive kind of old fellow, and was not given to thrusting; however, as he caught sight of the worthy *clericus*, he dropped into him at once. Now, the good parson not liking to be so roughly handled, and feeling aggrieved at being so picked out from the rest, quietly turned his horse's head, and rode home, saying that he did not mind being d——d with the rest of the crowd, and collectively, but he did not like being d——d individually, and that though he was used to being sworn at with others, he did not see why he should be d——d all alone. Thus "his Riverence," as Paddy would call him, rode quietly off from the stormy scene, and never turned his horse's head till he arrived at the rectory, and it was not till the morrow that he felt quite at his ease, for the endearing remarks and good wishes of yesterday had sunk deep

into his soul, and the wound that had been made still rankled in his breast. As he sits at breakfast however next day, a letter arrives, for which he has to pay ninepence, the usual charge for an ordinary letter in those days, and many is the letter for which I have paid as much as elevenpence. There was no penny post, and nothing but a letter being franked by some M.P. could save you from having to fork out one of the above named sums.

The letter in question is from the Master of the hounds, whose heart in reality was as warm as his temper was uncontrollable. He regrets that anything he should have said in the heat of the moment should have caused his old and reverend friend so much annoyance as to cause him to turn his horse's head and ride deliberately home, and he assures him at the same time that, but for the shortness of his neck, the broken state of his bellows, and the attack of asthma that he was then suffering from, he should have used, as Mrs. Malaprop says, a much stronger "derangement of epitaphs," and should probably have consigned him body and soul to perdition at once. That he is aware that using bad words is wrong, but that as it is much done by Masters of hounds, he hopes he will think no more about what has so lately



taken place, and that he shall see him out again at the next meet that is within distance of the rectory, which he will take care shall be on as early a day as possible, that all may be forgotten and forgiven, and that they may faint alternately in one another's arms, and meet again as friends. This happy event soon took place, and the fireaway Master of the harriers in question for ever afterwards took care to be courteous in his manner to his old and reverend friend, who was mighty fond of a little bit of hunting in a quiet way, and nothing pleased him better than a day occasionally with the little “currant jelly dogs,” now that the Master had promised to abstain from d——g him. Poor old Mr. —, as I said before, was a preacher of, and a man of, peace, and not a regular hunting parson who rode hard, and thrust, and made himself objectionable.

I never could quite make out why these men of peace were very often so unpeaceful. This, however, was frequently the case, and the regular hunting parson or sporting parson was, as a rule, very unruly, and was never satisfied if he was not first. When hunting he generally rode jealous, when shooting he generally shot jealous. So long as he could keep first, he was as far as it is possible satisfied, but if not first,

and quite first, as he thought he ought to be, he became disquieted in mind. The fire within his clerical breast on such occasions would kindle, and he would ride over the hounds, his dearest friend, or even over a factory, should such an obstacle come in his way. In shooting he was pretty much of the same temperament, and always was on the look out for the main chance, sidling up to the dogs when pointing, in such a way as to get the best chance at the covey when it rose, and upon such an occasion he would not be very particular about shooting across his companion, and what was called "taking your bird" or "taking your shot;" he was sometimes, though not often, pricked in his conscience, and, when the case was too palpable, might be heard to say "I hope I did not shoot across you," or some such guilty ebullition of feeling, but he generally felt that he was a privileged person, and from being a parson might do pretty much as he liked. He was more frequently than otherwise a good shot, and from this fact, and the fact of being extremely jealous, or what he himself denominated—very fond of shooting, he was oftentimes a very great nuisance.

He was wont to be a very good fellow at heart, in spite of all his shooting and hunting keenness, and

when he had his toes on the fire after dinner he would crack his bottle of port with most men of his day, and describe in the mildest terms the adventures of the day's hunting, or of the day's shooting, as if he had been the most tractable and considerate of men, and as if jealousy did not exist. Of course, on a Sunday he had his various avocations to perform connected with his church and parish in which he was much liked. He was not fond of long sermons, which was much to his credit, but he was often not quite so good in the tub as he was in the pigskin, and was often somewhat inclined to override the clerk a good deal in the responses, beginning his part of them before the clerk could get out of the way, indeed I may say rather jumping on the top of him in this respect. In the tub he would at times be rather eloquent, and if the short sermon he delivered himself of was from some good author or some good manuscript, which we all know, even in these days, are to be had at a moderate cost, was well delivered, with a clear voice and good intonation, his discourses were not otherwise than instructive and did his parishioners much good. The eloquence, however, and the delivery of his sermons were not apt to be very powerful, and if he did not hurry over them, which was apt to be the case,

his delivery was often very moderate, and if at any distance from him, you could hardly make out what he said, and from the *voilé* manner in which his discourse was given out, he was bad to be heard, and what was heard was so confused that I might almost compare it to the buzzing noise made by a bee in a churn.

I hope I am not painting the devil blacker than he really was, and I hope that in the present day there are no parsons of any kind, hunting, or shooting, or sporting, who would think of attending a funeral in their top boots and spurs ; but such things have been : should any such be still to be found, who feel that the cap fits them, let them wear it. *Palman qui meruit ferat*, which, rendered into English is, "Birch and green holly, birch and green holly, if thou be beaten, boy, thank thine own folly."

Forgive me, Reverend Sirs, if I seem to be hard upon you ; but I have seen the time when some of the cloth were almost too fast. I trust since the time I am writing about, that you have in many respects mended your manners, and though you hunt and shoot in moderation, which is good for your health, and harmless when done in a moderate way, you have left off the fast and jealous ways I have mentioned, as having come under my

observation in days long past and gone. I have little doubt but there have been, and may still remain, many of these thrusting members of the Church Militant who would not have disgraced any other profession militant, either by sea or land, and who would have stormed the Redan, or taken Sebastapol single-handed, had they been called upon to perform such an enterprising feat. And it has often been a matter of wonder to me why, in any time of war, the commander-in-chief has not raised a regiment of gentlemen in black, many of whom might doubtless be found amongst the poor curates as well as the sporting parsons, to volunteer for such a noble purpose; and, as at the present time we have a regiment of volunteers who go by the name of the "Devil's Own," so we might also have a regiment going under the denomination of the "Devil's Blacks." For I do truly believe, that where the smell of gunpowder is there he would delight to be. His love of the pig-skin, and his delight at the smell of gunpowder, are unbounded. No schoolboy, on the Fifth of November, ever revelled in the smell of squibs and crackers as he does in the fumes that are emitted from the crack of his gun. You may positively see his nostrils

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expand as he scents the battle from afar, whenever anything like gunpowder is in question.

When shooting and hunting are over, and when the weather is too hot for him to be tempted down to the river, for he is a good fisherman, and keen also in the gentle art, he will sit for hours under the shade of a tree, potting blackbirds and thrushes as they top the garden wall, with a cherry or some such dainty in their bills. This requires some little skill, and serves to keep his hand in ; he is also fond of his garden, and does not like his cherries to be so ruthlessly borne away. Blackbirds and thrushes, like pigeons, do make pretty pies ; and a blackbird pudding, with a little bit of beefsteak in it is by no means a despicable dish, when partridges, and pheasants, and other game are not in season. When there is no hunting or shooting going, and when the weather is too hot for any sporting, he is apt to suffer from what is called *ennui* or the blue devils, which interpreted means, he gets hipped, and bilious, and hates himself and everybody else. His medical man tells him that he must amuse himself in some way or another, that the smell of gunpowder is good for him, and is very strengthening to the nerves. *Ergo* he pots blackbirds and

thrushes, and any other small craft that can be legitimately killed, at such a dull time of year.

Thus he wiles away many an hour that would otherwise hang terribly heavily on his hands. He kills the birds that steal his cherries; he enjoys the pies and puddings that their bodies afford him, and above all things, he gets the smell of gunpowder which his medical man insists upon his doing for the good of his health. I do not know that he ever got as far in his love for guns and shooting as the late Sir Richard Sutton did—I mean the Sir Richard Sutton who hunted the Cottesmore country after the good old Lord Lonsdale's time, and who died in 1855. He was a keen sportsman in every way, very fond of fishing, a first class man to hounds, and perhaps the best shot of his time. He shot with a flint and steel gun to the day of his death. I once asked him his reason for so doing, and his answer was, “I used to shoot with *tubes*, but I found that in firing so often as I did, they made my head ache and made me deaf: and, in the second place, I like to do what other people can't.” “Ah,” I said, “your last reason is the most likely of the two.” “Well, then,” he said, “I suppose you must have it so.”

He had the misfortune to get a bad fall, and broke

his leg, and when he was getting nearly well he managed to break it again. After this second fracture in the same place, nothing that the doctors could do would induce the bone to what is called "knit," and he was doomed to have his thigh incased in a kind of iron cradle, which was at times screwed up very tight to cause a certain amount of inflammation in the thigh bone, and caused him, as he expressed it to me, "the tortures of the d—l." As soon as he was able to sit up a little he began to long for some fresh air, and accordingly he sat up in a bath-chair and was drawn on to the lawn. With returning strength he began to think of horses, dogs, and guns, and being a bit *désœuvré*, he sent for one of his old tinder boxes, as he called his flint and steel guns, and after having cocked and uncocked it a great many times, he longed to shoot something, and like our clerical friend, he felt sure that the smell of powder would do him good. Accordingly, when an old friend of his and mine called to see him, he found him sitting in his bath-chair one broiling summer's day, with his servant holding an umbrella over his head, shooting butterflies.

He was quite the best shot I ever saw ; he shot



with the lightest possible triggers, indeed they seemed hardly safe; and unless the old tinder box missed fire, which it sometimes did, nothing that moved was safe; no pheasant flew too high, no partridge flew too fast, and as for hares, and rabbits in covert or out of covert, if he caught a sight of them they were as good as cooked.

It was but seldom that Sir Richard saw his own house by daylight. I suspect he was generally off hunting at cock-crow, and on a non-hunting day he was off somewhere to shoot, and did not get home till the shades of evening were closing o'er him. As soon as he got home, whether from hunting or shooting, he invariably turned in and got forty winks before dressing for dinner. He had nothing to do after the fatigues of the day, but to refresh his body and mind by a little sleep: he had no parish duties to attend to after he got home, as our clerical friend had, who, with all his love for outdoor sports, was, as a rule, attentive to his duties; and though he often did not see his home during the dark winter months by daylight, he never neglected looking after his parishioners; and if any one required his counsel, or consolation from him, he would, I have heard, when there was no moon,

go his rounds, preceded by his coachman or one of his grooms carrying the horn stable lantern.

Some of my readers will, I fear, think that he was a little eccentric. So he was, but he was a real good fellow; could tell a good story, and drink his, shall I say, *bottle* of wine with comfort. More made him dangerous and contrary-wise thinking.

He liked the best of everything, and had what they call been "sworn in at Highgate." He liked venison better than mutton, cream in his tea better than milk, a good day's shooting better than a moderate one; and if there was a lord or a bit of royalty in the matter, he would throw his best friend over sooner than not be in attendance on such an auspicious occasion. In fact, as his medical man had told him that he ought to get the best of everything for the sake of his health, so at all times did he.

Having made this little digression in favour of our friend the hunting parson, whose impetuosity has been in some measure subdued by the mild rebuke of the colonel, we will return to Slack and his hounds who are now fairly out of the covert. A couple of staves from his trumpet announce that they are gone away. This they have done, with

their heads pointing for Market Overton, below which village they cross the Oakham canal for Teigh and the far-famed Whissendine, whose waters are too well known to all frequenting those parts to need any description from me. To those who do not know the locality, I may just remark that Whissendine, when a “bumper,” takes some negotiating.

It is not, however, my intention here to attempt to get over it, or to tell of the various mishaps that occurred. Suffice it to say that, though some got over, many got in, and some would not have it at all. Amongst the rest was our friend the parson, who much against his will, having his funeral in view instead of the fox, most reluctantly turned his horse's head when he found that he would be obliged to face the shining river if he went a field further on, and possibly would have to ride home, about fourteen miles, and perform the melancholy duty that he feared he should be late for, with his breeches' pockets full of water. Keen as he was by nature, and fearing nothing, either in the shape of fire or water, still having a certain kind of awe of the Bishop, should he hear of him performing his duties in his spurs and wet clothes, he *malgré lui* had to call discretion to his aid, for no one could doubt his valour, and rode off

home. Nor will I follow the Melton men, who, no longer resplendent in their well polished chimney-pot hats, which from having been in the water were reduced to the consistency of tripe, their dapper white cord breeches, and their scrupulously shining boots, would wend their ways back to Melton to change and dress for dinner, and drink their old Carbonell's crusted port or their Snead's claret, and recount the events of the run in their red coats, which in these days were universally worn at dinner by hunting men. In the days I am speaking of people used to drink a good deal more wine after dinner than in the present day, and a bottle of port wine was a common quantum with many of the thirsty souls, who required something to keep their peckers up after a long day and a ducking in Whissendine brook, and this was generally achieved by drinking the two admirable mixtures I have named. Snead's claret was famed in those days, and from having a great deal of body in it was an admirable reviver.

In these days it would be called "loaded," but what with I never could make out, for it was very good, and if loaded at all it was loaded with something very much to the purpose. In those days of yore men did not drink nips of sherry all day long, and B. and S.

was a thing positively unknown, brandy being seldom drunk unless to ease the stomach-ache, and soda-water very seldom, except to cure what goes under the denomination of "hot coppers."

But after a day's hunting a fair quantity of Sned's claret was much recommended, and as a fellow did not persecute his stomach with all kinds of squashy rubbish whenever he could get a chance during the day, he required something after dinner that would stick to his ribs a little better than the light mixtures of the present day.

The following anecdote will, perhaps, induce some to think that some people drank more than was quite reasonable or good for them. The actors in the said anecdote are long since dead and gone, or I should not dare to tell tales.

An uncle of mine, who was a very abstemious man himself, assured me that when dining at a gentleman's house not far from Melton, near which place he was himself living for hunting, after he had had a skin full himself—in fact he said, "I had had quite as much as I could carry safely"—he saw Lord Alvanley and old Frank Forester drink four bottles of claret each; he further added, "when I had done they had quite as much, if not more, than I had, and where

the devil they put it, and why they were not quite drunk, I never could make out."

In the days I have been speaking of almost everybody, excepting the hunting parson—he was not quite fast enough for that—came down to dinner in his red coat; I may say everybody did who wore a red coat out hunting, and was in the kind of society that entitled him to wear one at all. The Melton swells all did, and very well it used to look, I used to think.

It so happened that one of the swells thought he would set the fashion of not coming to dinner in his; he, however, got chaffed a good deal for trying to do away with the old custom, which his other friends thought a good one. He was a great dandy, and had a more than usually large pair of black whiskers, upon which he greatly prided himself. After dinner one evening the subject of red coats came up, and he was laying down the law a good deal, he got a little angry, and turning to one of the red-coated ones he said, "I wonder that you, above all others, should uphold and practise such a barbarous system, for I call it nothing else." All passed off at the time, for they all saw that he was a bit riled, and as they did not wish to see his monkey up more

than it was, for he was a peppery kind of fellow, they let the matter drop.

The next evening his friend, whom he accused of practising such a barbarous custom as wearing a red coat at dinner, said to him, "Oh, by the by, C——, what do you think a fellow said to me this morning? He asked me, meaning *you* of course, if I knew who that hairy swell was."—"The devil he did! I wonder who he was? Who was he? I never heard of such an impertinent fellow; if I knew who he was, I'd make him eat his words. Do you really mean to say that he had the insolence to call me a 'hairy swell'? By Jove, I'd horsewhip him if I knew who he was. I wish I could find out who it was."—"Oh," said he, "there is no difficulty about that, for I'll tell you—it was that pistol-shooting fellow Ross."

Upon this he became less irate, and like a snail who fears being touched he drew in his horns and pretended to be dead.

Captain Ross, amongst other shooting and sporting acquirements, was a wonderful shot with a pistol, and for a bet backed himself to kill twenty swallows flying with a pistol and ball. He won his bet, and as he told me himself, this is the way he did it. When living at Rossie Castle, near Montrose, and at which castle

he was born, he laid a bet with Mr. George Foljambe and another gentleman of one hundred pounds that he would kill twenty swallows flying with a ball.

He says, "I had a very large castellated chateau with five big turrets, which appeared to have been built expressly for the accommodation of swallows; they were in thousands. I noticed that swallows before entering their nest always paused for a second or so with outspread wings, and offered a not very difficult shot to a good pistol-shot, which I was. I killed them all before breakfast."

He further says, "I got a great deal of undeserved merit as regards that match. It was not very difficult for a good pistol-shot, provided he had the same advantage I had."

This is a very modest translation of the affair, but no man ever did such a feat before or since, and it is only justice to the performer to say that though a capital rider, a capital sportsman in every way, and quite first class where a gun or rifle was concerned, no one ever heard Horatio Ross brag of his doings, and though bold as a lion and crafty as a weasel, he never talked about his "arts and sciences," but let other people find them out. Every sportsman has heard of the famous steeplechase between Clinker and Crasher,



the owners of which were Captain Ross and Lord Kennedy. There are some remaining who remember this noted race, and, with myself, would be inclined to say, in the words of the song, “Oh could those days but come again,” for they were good old days, but perhaps not so outrageously fast as those of the present generation.

Thus ends the story of wearing red coats at dinner. There seems in these days to be a mighty revolution in the feelings of the present race of gentlemen, not only as to politics and other weighty matters, upon which I have nothing to say, but there does seem to me a matter, which, as I am speaking of hunting, deserves I humbly think some comment. A gentleman, we all are aware, is and ever will be a gentleman, “provided he behaves as sich,” to the end of time, and whether he comes out hunting in a red coat, a black coat, or a shooting coat, and knickerbockers and long stockings or gaiters, provided the blood that circulates (which it is sure to do out hunting) within his veins is gentle, and which entitles him to wear a red coat, not only for the sake of his personal appearance, but also for the smart look that it gives to the field, and I may say is a kind of respect to the hounds he hunts with. In days gone by none but gentlemen

ever appeared in a red coat—the servants of the hunt as a matter of course excepted—no gentleman, except the hunting parson or some one who had lost a near relative, ever dreamt of appearing in black. There was no such absurdity known, for every one prided himself on his red coat, feeling that it was the only token which distinguished him from his grocer's apprentice, his lawyer's clerk, or his tailor's goose.

Go to a meet in these days, and where one saw a hundred red-coats twenty years since, there will not be twenty now. A sad change has come over the spirit of my dream, but, so it is. Who could have set such an absurd fashion, and why others should follow such an absurd fashion, no one seems to be able to say, except that everything must give way to fashion, and that one fool makes many.

What would the good old Earl, Sir Richard Sutton, Burrows, Henley Greaves, all of whom I have known as masters of the Cottesmore hounds, say, if they could see the present generation of swells riding in black coats instead of scarlet, and looking like a field of undertakers in top-boots, instead of looking like the pride of England, the country gentleman and his sons, and those who are by rank and birth entitled to the name of the aristocracy?

## CHAPTER II.

“JACK LAMBERT SWEARS A LITTLE.”

ONE or two anecdotes of the good old times I am writing about may not be out of place, and may amuse.

I will begin with one of Lambert's, who at the time I name was first whip to the Cottesmore. The said Jack Lambert was a wonderfully keen fellow—he had an eye like a hawk, was a capital rider, knew his business thoroughly well, and was withal left-handed, and with his left hand he was wont, if put out, to punish a hound with a peculiar cut, given under the horse's neck, in a way that nearly took him off his legs, and would make him howl like the danger whistle of a railway train of the present day. The poor, good old Earl could not bear to hear a hound punished, and many is the time that I have heard him say, “Oh, that fellow Lambert, why does he hit those hounds in such a savage way?”

The old Earl could not bear anything like bad language, or to hear any one swear. Jack Lambert, if he got much excited, would at times break out a little, and if he thought the Earl was out of hearing sometimes could anathematise a bit. It happened one day that as I was passing up a riding in a wood called Castle Dykes, alongside of Lambert, he was giving way to a few ebullitions of his feelings in the shape of oaths—in fact he was swearing. We passed Lord Lonsdale, who mildly rebuked him in these words, “Oh, Lambert, Lambert, can’t you do all that without swearing?” to which Jack Lambert, reverently touching his hat, said, “No, my lord, d——d if I can, they do roile me so,” meaning, of course, rile me so, or put me out.

On getting to a corner of the wood where there was a good deal of holloaing and shouting and yelling going on, for there were several foxes on foot, Lambert accosted the son of one of my father’s tenants named Bland, who was making the most discordant and inhuman noise, which he prided himself was a view holloa of the first order, “Oh, dear! oh, dear! whatever are you making that terrible noise about? Shut your mouth, shut your mouth, or by G—— I’ll ride down your throat!” And I really

expected he would have done it by the way he caught his horse by the head and rode up to him, luckily there was a strong post and rails in the hedge or he might have tried it on.

### JACK ABBEY AND THE CUB.

Jack Abbey, who was second whip in those days deserves an anecdote. It was late in the season and there were some early cubs about. We were in a huge wood in the Fen Country called Bourn Wood. The day was quite hot for the time of year and everybody was wishing themselves out of Bourn Wood, which is a difficult thing to achieve at any time with hounds. As we were sitting or waiting in a riding, a vixen crossed quite close to us with a cub in her mouth. Jack Abbey cracked his whip at her, and she dropped the poor little fellow. Jack was off his horse in a twinkling, and, picking up the cub, put it into his hat, and rode on with it. Our little friend soon began to feel a little uncomfortable in such close quarters, and, from being pretty nearly stifled, showed signs of wishing to get some fresh air by moving about and clawing the top of Jack's head. He accordingly took him out of his hat, wrapped him up in his pocket-handkerchief, and,

in this manner and like a fond mother, having put him into the bosom of his coat, he carried him home to Cottesmore in safety and triumph. The said cub lived for many years in a small kennel chained up in the stable-yard at Cottesmore, and died at a mature old age of a natural death, instead of being eaten up by the hounds, who, though they passed him almost every day, took no kind of notice of him.

Jack Abbey was for many years second whip to the Cottesmore. In his latter days he kept a public-house in Market Overton, and was, as the saying goes, his own best customer, and was always more or less screwed. He was one of the good Samaritans who picked me up when I got the bad fall, behind the village of Cottesmore, and to his last days he would cry if I talked to him of the event. He was generally crying drunk, and on those occasions, if I named the subject to him, I could not only move him to tears, but he would fairly blubber.

#### HOW PARSON EMPSON TOOK HIS NOSE TO THE DOCTOR.

Parson Empson, or Dick Empson as he was called, was well known in the Cottesmore country, got a bit of a howler over some rails about four or five miles

from Oakham. He and his horse and everything belonging to him were all down together, and to achieve the feat of getting up again, there was, of course, a considerable struggle, for horse and rider seemed pretty well tied up in a knot, it being in some deepish ground. In getting up his horse put his foot upon his nose, and poor Parson Empson when he arrived on his feet found that his nose was pretty nearly cut off, his face bleeding, and all over mud. He cut but a poor figure, for his beauty was fairly spoilt.

He seemed hardly to know what was to be done, for there was nobody out competent to set in order his unfortunate olfactory organ. After some little indecision he made up his mind to take his nose off to the doctor's at Oakham to get it dressed and set to rights.

Accordingly, pulling out his handkerchief, he wrapped it up in it as well as he could, and started off to the aforesaid town, where, luckily for him, he found the then well-known Sawbones, by name Mr. Orange, at home. After having shown the damaged organ, Mr. Orange pronounced the following—"Well, Mr. Empson, you've got a very nasty cut, and your nose is almost off. I can do which you like. Either

cut it off, as it's only hanging by a small bit of skin, as it were, or I think I could make a fairly good job, by stitching it on again. Which would you wish?"

"Well," said his reverence in the coolest possible manner, "do which you like, Mr. Orange, but pray do what you think Mrs. Empson would like best." So thinking that she would like him better with his nose on than with his nose off, he stitched it on and made a good job of it, as was proved by his being out again in a few days with nothing but a blue-looking seam down it.



## CHAPTER III.

RUN FROM "GIBBET GORSE," AND A CROPPER.

IT is not probable that there are many in these days who will take much interest in what happened sixty or more years since to an old fellow who was then a youngster. But there are one or two little matters which occurred in his short hunting career which may be not otherwise than of interest. I could tell of many curious things, as the spider said to the fly, but I will content myself with two or three of them, feeling that enough is as good as a feast, or *quantum sat*. I will begin with the meet at Gibbet Gorse and a notable cropper, a regular howler, or a "father and mother" of a fall, that I had the honour of getting close to Cottesmore.

It was a dull and, what a Scotchman would call, a softish morning, when we arrived at Gibbet Gorse, so called from a gibbet having been erected there

and upon which a man was hanged for a murder he had committed. The gibbet, which was called "Weldon's gibbet," was still standing in the days I am speaking of, and the iron cradle which had contained the murderer's head was still lying on the ground close by under the gibbet. I fancy that, as the times grew more enlightened, all these most useful warnings to evil doers have by degrees disappeared. And I fancy, for I have not seen the place for many years, that the gorse alone remains, and is as famed now as it used to be for always holding a fox.

As we rode up to the said gorse, I remember remarking to Lambert that it was rather a moist day for a new hunting coat, which I was just bringing out. "Yes, sir. Yes," said Lambert, "I hope you won't be dirtying that new pink to-day!" at the same time touching his hat most politely, as much as to say, "I should not wonder if you got a cropper, having such a smart new coat on."

The hounds were thrown in just under the gibbet, and in less time than it takes me to tell it, my friend is out of covert and away towards Oakham. Leaving Oakham to the right he points for Langham, which he leaves on his left, and turns to the right and makes

for Burley-on-the-Hill, and passing the blacksmith's shop on the hill, where the roads run to Cottesmore, Oakham, and Langham, he gets into the Burley grounds, and seems to be leaving the house on the left, and to be making for the fish-ponds. He, however, makes a sharpish double, and comes up to nearly where he went into the grounds. He then runs along the right-hand side of the road leading from the blacksmith's shop to Cottesmore, the riders keeping the road, till he came to a cottage or two and some small gardens by the side of a wall. Here there is a check, and everybody seems to wonder where he can be gone to ; all of a sudden there is a tremendous rush of the hounds into a corner of the wall, and of course he must be killed. But no, his guts are not out, and everybody knows a fox is never dead till his guts are out ; and though in the very midst of the hounds, he jumps on to their very backs, on to the wall, runs along the wall for some distance, whilst hounds and everybody are in a state of wonder and perplexity, for it was in a very queer and cramped place, and he crosses the road at the turnpike-gate leading to Exton, from the Cottesmore and Oakham road. When across the road, he ran within half a field parallel with the said road nearly up to Cottesmore ;

there, however, made a turn across the road as if he meant to go to Ashwell, but turning back again close to the village of Cottesmore, he ran down a pathway which was at the back of that village and parallel with it. There had been a capital scent, and we had made him jog along pretty merrily, and we were evidently about to kill our fox. The footpath along which we were riding was very wet and as greasy as butter. I was riding a little mare that we called Zigzag, from the crooked way in which she stood in the stables; she was a particularly clever animal and a capital fencer, but she had one great fault, which was, that if she got a bit tired she would refuse, or try to do so.

It so happened that at the end of the footpath there was a stile—the sort of stile that one has seen depicted with an old woman in a red cloak, with a basket of eggs and butter on her arm, going to market. A real good stile, with a kind of foot-board at about the second rail, to assist such old women over, and on the other side was a back lane leading into the village, with a bit of a drop down. We were all getting a bit sticky, for we had come pretty fast from where our fox crossed the road at the turnpike leading to Exton. Lambert was a little ahead of me, evidently bent on

facing the stile, which I soon perceived had a young green ashpole of unpleasant-looking strength nailed across the top. Colonel Lowther and Parson Lucas, as he used to be called, seeing a more comfortable-looking place a little to our right, called out to me, "Don't go there ; don't go there !" But what was to be done ? We had all the sail set that we could possibly carry, and Lambert charged the obstacle. "Over," said I to myself, and at it I went. The mare was blown, and I could feel that she meant to refuse if possible, so I kept her head straight and rammed my spurs in ; but no, she would not have it, or she was too much pumped out to be willing to try. She made a kind of rise, and hitting the ashpole with her knees, over we came into the lane. I have a vague remembrance to this very day of the sounds of cannon, thunder, cymbals, church-bells, and other kinds of music, with an accompaniment of mighty waters rushing into my ears and over my head ; visions of lightning, and flashings of all kinds of colours, men in red and black and green coats, and every kind of object that can be imagined, and which, I conclude, others in the same predicament may have seen also.

I remembered nothing more till I found myself in a hot slipper bath in a room at Cottesmore, with

two ladies standing over me, and pouring something down my throat which looked very much like a black dose, but which was in reality a cordial mixture, composed of cardamums and aloetic wine. With this mixture Dr. Willis, the renowned M.D. of those days, and who used to attend George III., used to drench everybody that came under his notice, when they had had a bad fall, instead of bleeding them, or what used to be termed "bleeding them," which he considered was a most dangerous practice, and of which, I have no doubt, many a poor fellow has died—at least, so Dr. Willis used to say, and he was a first-rate authority. He was a great character in his way, kept a first-rate pack of harriers and a great many horses, and positively lived on his horse. He died very suddenly, whilst staying at a friend's house near Lincoln for the races.

No man was more regretted, for he was a good and kind man, a most agreeable companion, full of fun and anecdote, courteous and gentle in manner, and thus universally esteemed.

The two ladies who thus administered the suspicious-looking dose, and so kindly ministered to my wants, were Lady Frederick Bentinck and Miss Thompson; the latter a very old friend of Lord

Lonsdale's, and who daily when he was going out hunting, which he did in all weathers, and always rode to the meet, used to wrap his silk handkerchief or comforter round his neck, see that he was warm and cozy, and bid him God speed before he got upon his horse. Lady Frederick Bentinck, who was daughter of the good old Earl, was one of the ladies in the red habits that I have before mentioned.

After I had quite come back to my proper senses I was sent home, about eight miles, in the Earl's carriage, and having arrived at home I was duly put to bed, where I remained for about a week; for, as may be supposed, I had had a precious shaking, and was a good deal bruised, and pretty much the colour of a plum all down one side. However, as no bones were broken, I soon went through all the changes of the chameleon, and after about ten days came out again as good as new. They said I had had a very near squeak for it, and that everybody thought I must be killed from the way in which the mare seemed to tumble upon me. Had it been in these days there is little doubt that I should have been dead—not only in my father's halls, but mourned from Johnny Groat's house to the Land's End, in Cornwall. But, as there were no

telegraph wires along the north road, and no railways in the remote times I am speaking of, my anxious parents did not know anything of what had happened till they got a note, sent over by one of Lord Lonsdale's servants, to say that I had had a real crumpler, that I was still in life, and should be sent home in the Earl's carriage as soon as I was fit to travel, which happened accordingly. Nevertheless, in spite of there being no faster communication than the royal mail, a letter soon arrived from our old friend, General Grosvenor, which runs thus :—

“I hear that my friend Charles has had a bad fall, and that he was sent home in the Earl's carriage. This sounds serious. Do let me know how it happened, and all about it. Tell him I will teach him how to ride at a rail. Tell him he should never ride straight at a rail, but always sideways.”

Now as the good old General was never known to ride at a rail, or an obstacle of any kind, though his instructions might be good, they could not have been from his own experience, and though this might do in theory, I much question whether such a crab-like proceeding would do in practice. One would imagine that it would be a first-rate plan for getting a real howler, and probably getting one's neck



broken. Getting your neck broken, however, is, luckily, not a very easy proceeding, and it seems to be almost an art to do so.

Old Frank Forester, of former days, rode into a pit, which ought to have killed him if he had any luck at all, and, on another man seeing the disaster and calling out to those following to "'Ware pit," he got reprimanded with, "Hold your tongue, you d——d fool, if you don't make such a noise we shall have the pit full; you'll spoil all the fun if you go on so!" No doubt there are many wonderful escapes from destruction when hunting, and some men seem to have charmed lives, and, when they have their monkey up, ride at many things that no horse has any business to achieve; and still they seldom come to real grief. What height any horse has ever been known to jump I should like to know; but wondrous are the fences that some people get over, no doubt, and wondrous are the places that some people fancy they get over until they are measured. In hot blood, no doubt, desperate deeds are done, deeds of daring, which nothing but hounds running would authorise a man to attempt. In cold blood the feeling is widely different, we all know, and I will proceed to relate the tallest jump that I ever heard of, though

some of my readers may have heard of and done more than my friend, who allowed me to write out his statement, and signed his name to it in my Book of Facts. It runs as follows:—

“The event took place about the year 1851 or 1852, the rider weighing ten stone four pounds. He bought a horse at Cahermee Fair in Ireland, from a Limerick breeder named Clifford. The horse’s age was four years old, and he got him trained as a hunter by himself. The horse was so extraordinary a jumper that he states he was constantly in the habit of riding him over a stone wall seven feet three inches in height without his touching it. The horse’s name was Giraffe, and was only a half-bred horse, a bay, with black legs.” (Signed——M.P.)

This story may seem almost incredible, but the gentleman who owned the horse related the story to me himself, and added that the stone wall was not one that would give way if hit, but that it was a solidly built wall, with a coping at top.

The relater of this is a gentleman of position and well-known as to be depended upon, and was an M.P. I do not give his name, but as I have his signature to the statement I am bound to, and do believe all he has told me. Otherwise, I should be much inclined

to doubt the fact, and should feel inclined to say as an Irish gentleman did on a certain occasion when a lot of jolly fellows were telling incredible stories against each other over their whiskey and water and pipes in the smoking room. Various good stories having been told, and particularly one relating to some crows and rooks, story after story having gone the round, something that had particularly pleased our friend Paddy came up, upon which he ejaculated, being pleasantly elated with his pipe and whiskey, "Ah! sure, that's a great story, but it's nothing to the story about the crows," and turning to one of the gentlemen he said, "Mr. M——, would you kindly ask your friend to tell that infernal lie about the crows again?"

Stories that are hardly credible, however, do happen. Charles Powell, who was huntsman to Sir John Trollope (the late Lord Kesteven, but who at the time I name had not come into the title of Kesteven), when I asked him for a fact for my book, said that the most curious thing he had ever seen was as follows:—"I saw, about 1836, at Fiskerton Daly Mar, whilst hunting with Mr. Wyndham's hounds, two hares in an osier bed run up a riding against each other, and kill each other dead upon the spot."

## CHAPTER IV.

### GENERAL GROSVENOR.

OF course, in the days I am speaking of, we had some characters amongst us, as there are in these days, and one of them was old General Grosvenor, afterwards Field Marshal Grosvenor. By some of his own standing he was called Tom Grosvenor, and a real good-hearted, pleasant, amusing old fellow he was, full of fun and good stories, for he had seen a deal of life, and had been on service in many parts of the world. He lived for many years at Stocken Hall, which he rented of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, and which, in these days, is the property of Lord Aveland. He was very fond of society, and from the fact of living within a couple of miles of the great north road, midway between Stamford and Grantham, where there were over forty coaches and mails running during every twenty-four hours, he was

seldom without a houseful during the hunting season, for he was most hospitable, and, having a large heart, which was, perhaps, larger than his purse, he was never without, what is called, company. This at times used to interfere, at least so report used to say, with his butcher's and other tradesmen's bills at Christmas ; but they all knew that the General would pay, and so they never ran him very hard.

There was, however, a certain tailor who, though only a country tailor, was considerably patronised by the General, and, instead of thinking his patronage sufficient for his own maintenance and that of his family, he, having more than once sent him in his little bill, had the audacity at last to put in an appearance himself. The General, finding no way of escape from this interview, though he smelt a rat, received him most courteously ; and, after a good deal of talk about various matters, the tailor, not to be shaken off with any small talk, drew from his pocket the document, and presented it with, " If you please, General, I have brought you my small account ; it has been standing for some time, General, would you be so good as to settle it ? " The General, finding that snip was inexorable, paid the bill ; he, however, was not altogether, what is called, highly delighted,

and, taking the receipted bill from him and putting it into a drawer to keep company with a host of others that I almost fear may not have been receipted, he wished him a good-day, adding, "I tell you what, Mr. H——, you are a d——d bad tailor, and if I had thought that you would ever have expected to be paid, by Jove, I would never have employed you!"

The General was very fond of horse flesh, in which it delighted him to dabble at times, and he would be almost sure to make a bid for anything, be it ever so rough, that seemed likely to make a horse.

He never in my recollection rode to hounds, but he was always on the go, and it was most amusing to see him pounding along whenever there was an opportunity of trying a horse. "Such a clever goer—now, isn't he a clever goer? By Jove, he'll make a clever horse!" I here give you a portrait of him in full cry; it was done by my father, the late General Birch Reynardson, and is a faithful likeness of him, and his seat, under the exciting circumstances.

He was uncommonly fond of a bit of horse-dealing, and if he got hold of a screw, which sometimes happened to him, as it does also in these more wide-awake days, he was a first-rate hand at getting rid of it.



*To face page 64.*

General Grosvenor in full cry





He wrote a most amusing letter, and could descant upon the merits of a screw till he would persuade a friend that he was all right.

It happened one day that, after a deal of persuasive eloquence, he sold a horse to a friend of his named Conyers, who, after having ridden him two or three times, found that he was blind of an eye. Of course he was much mortified and vexed and so forth, and wrote a letter to the General to express this feeling; and at the same time told him that he ought, and that he should expect him, to take the horse back and return the money.

The General's answer was short, pithy, and to the purpose, and these were his words:—

“DEAR CONYERS,—If the horse had not eyes, you had.

“Yours truly,

“T. GROSVENOR.”

He, however, never returned him the money, and the horse was sold at Tattersall's for what he would fetch.

Amongst the General's other accomplishments he was a bit of a poet, and often wrote some really clever verses. He had a favourite black horse, which, from having bought him from a butcher, he named Black

Butcher. Like all favourites Black Butcher died one day, and the General, being quite disconsolate, vented his grief in the following lines, which are still extant upon a monument in the middle riding of Mawkery Wood, and close to Stocken Hall :—

*“ When’er in Mawkery Wood you hear the sound  
Of Lowther’s voice encouraging the hound,  
Pass ye not heedless by this pile of stones,  
For underneath lie honest Butcher’s bones ;  
Black was his colour, yet his nature fair,  
For where’er the hounds went Butcher would be there.  
’Tis Grosvenor pays this tribute to his worth,  
A better Hunter ne’er stretched leather girth.”*

In Mawkery Wood Black Butcher would be there, out of Mawkery Wood Black Butcher was very often not there, for he, though a clever horse, was, like his master, somewhat heavy, and they were wont to be a bit sticky across country. However, he was a great favourite, and tradition says that he and his old groom, Tom Perkins, who was also a character in his way, used to go once a year to his tomb, and there weep over him.

Tom Perkins used to look after the General’s race-horses, which he used occasionally to run at Newmarket, Stamford, and Croxton Park Races. The General, as a rule, was not a great winner, but

on one occasion at Newmarket he won the Riddlesworth Stakes, worth five thousand guineas, with a mare called Blue Stockings. He also won the Oaks with a chestnut mare, out of Oleander, and another Oaks with a mare called Briseis. But for all particulars of his racing exploits I must beg to refer you to the *Racing Calendar*, for it is a subject upon which I must own I know nothing, and for which I never had the slightest taste or affection.

The General used to run a horse or two at Stamford and Croxton Park, but I cannot call to mind his ever winning anything at either of them. He, however, was very fond of a race, and if he did not gain much himself, he used to help to make fun for others.

Stamford and Croxton Park Races in former days were very pleasant reunions. There were no railways, consequently no legs and betting men, no sounds of "Ten to one, I name the winner," "I'll bet ten to one, bar one," and such like vulgar sounds, and which are as painful to the ear as the smell of the beastly cabbage-leaf-made cigars, which are now smoked, is offensive to one's nasal organ.

There were but few paid jockeys, the generality being either the gentlemen who owned the horses, or some gentleman friend, or occasionally some groom

or coachman belonging to some of the gentlemen, and sometimes a young gentleman farmer would try his hand. For instance, Lord Wilton would ride, and every one knows that as a jockey, or across country, he was not to be beaten. Then there would be Osbaldiston, the Squire, as he was called, Colonel Lowther, Black White, old Platel, a solicitor from Peterborough, and others whose names I forget, and who are long since dead and gone. The principal amusements on the course used to be pea and thimble, pricking the garter, and a good deal of boxing, fighting with a legitimate ring and ropes, and a very fine amusement it used to be, to see two fellows strip and go at it, and punch each other's heads into twice the size they ought to be, and till their eyes and mouths were bunged up, so that their own mothers could not have recognised them.

At Stamford during the races there was always some cock-fighting to be seen, and at the hotel there was a regular cock-pit. Almost every sporting gent used to attend, and as there were no bobbies in those days, there was a good deal of betting, but everything was carried on in a very orderly kind of way, and people seemed to enjoy themselves; whether the cocks did I cannot say, but I heard a gentleman say that he was

sure they did, and that if they did not, why did they fight?

Such were the sports at Stamford and Croxton Park Races in those days.

I feel sure that a racecourse now contains ten times more blackguards than it did sixty years since.

Tom Perkins, whom I have named as the General's factotum as regards horse flesh, was, as the General was, very fond of the mare Briseis. Tom had a large family, and thinking that it would be a great thing for him to get some real gentleman to stand godfather to a daughter who had just made her entry into his establishment, he applied to his master to do him the honour to be responsible for the sins and wickedness of the little stranger which had just arrived.

"Upon my word, Tom," said the good-natured General, "I don't much like having any more godchildren, but as you seem to wish it so much, and as you are such a very old servant I don't mind standing godfather, but upon one condition, which is that you call her Briseis."

In a few days Tom came over to my father and told him what had happened, and that the people told him

that they were sure the clergyman would not christen the child, as Briseis was a heathen name, and it was very wicked to call any child by the name of a heathen. To this my father replied that as the General had acceded to his request and had promised to stand godfather it would be prudent to call the little daughter by any name he thought best.

Accordingly the child was named Briseis, and she ultimately become a milliner in London under the designation of Miss Briseis Perkins, milliner and dressmaker.

At the period I am writing about coachmen and grooms, and particularly those who aspired to the dignity of stud groom, were in the habit of wearing more waistcoats than was necessary—it was a kind of fashion among them.

It so happened that one evening after dinner there was a discussion about waistcoats—for many a swell would wear two and an under waistcoat—and the old General said, “Why, I’d lay a guinea my man Tom Perkins wears six every day of his life.” Upon which one of the party said “Done for a guinea, General.” The bell was rung. “Tell Tom Perkins I want to speak to him,” said the General. After a minute or two enters Tom Perkins. “Tom,” said the General,

“ I have laid a guinea that you have got six waistcoats on, let’s see.” Upon which Tom pulled off one, two, three, four, five, six, and there is still another, or perhaps two. “ Come, let’s see them all,” said the General laughing, and quite surprised at his success. “ Pull them all off, Tom, and let’s see how many you really do wear.” Upon which the faithful Tom smiled and said, “ I beg your pardon, General, you must not be too hard upon me, you’ve won your bet.”

“ I’ll tell you what a narrow escape I once had of being blown to pieces,” said the General to me; “ you’ll hardly believe such a thing possible. I was sitting in the trenches at the siege of Copenhagen, with some other officers, and the enemy were shelling us. We thought we were quite safe where we were, when suddenly a shell came hissing and fizzing, and alighted upon the corner of my cloak, which it carried with it, and buried it in the sand. The cloak was tightly hooked round my neck ; there seemed to be no escape, so I shouted to them, ‘ We must stand shot, down on your faces,’ which we luckily did in a twinkling. The next moment the shell burst, and not one of us was touched.”

He also related a curious anecdote as we were riding along together, which was this—That on the march

during the Walcheren expedition, his portmanteau, which was in a baggage-waggon, contained amongst his clothes a couple of bottles of brandy ; and when he came to open it, he discovered that a round shot had gone into the portmanteau, and was found inside, and had not broken either of the bottles.

During the latter part of his life he became almost blind, and one day, when dining with him and Mrs. Grosvenor, who was so short-sighted that she might also have been considered blind, I was not a little amused by seeing the butler, who I suppose thought I might be blind also, after having handed some patties round, standing by the side of one of the marble pillars that were in the room, and deliberately, and with much seeming gusto, eat those that remained upon the dish. The poor General could not see, Mrs. Grosvenor could not see, but I, who could see, saw the old fellow eat the patties with a wonderful deal of relish, and, I conclude, according to his usual custom.

But of all the narrow escapes that he had ever been aware of the General said that the narrowest was amongst his own countrymen. He was for some years in Parliament, and was returned for the city of Chester. Party spirit used to run high in those days, and an election row was quite as formidable



as a field of battle, and, except that your own compatriots were doing their best to kill each other, there was but little difference in the animosity they entertained towards one another. Brick-bats used to fly about instead of cannon balls, and bludgeons took the place of swords, and with these implements of warfare an election row was a somewhat serious affair, for no greater set of ruffians could be found anywhere than those who constituted an election mob; and when they had got into a real good state of excitement, and their dander was up under the influence of Chester ale, which in those days was far-famed, they would stick at nothing, and would have murdered their own father and mother if they had been on the opposite side of the question. It so happened that the General had gained his election, and his supporters, wishing to do him all honour, had taken the horses out of his carriage, and were dragging him in triumph over Chester bridge; the opposition party, however, coming up, there was a regular scrimmage, and their object was to throw the carriage over the bridge into the Dee. This they had all but succeeded in doing, but, as the General told me, "I was too much for them, for just as the carriage was being lifted up against the side of the bridge I

opened the door, and slipped out on the opposite side, where my own party rallied round me, and thus saved me from going over with the carriage, which was actually thrown into the river, and as they thought with me in it."

## CHAPTER V.

### FOXES, THEIR MODE OF LIVING.

FOXES are supposed to be most mischievous fellows, and so I suppose they are, and whether it be flesh or fowl, so long as they have the fun of killing it themselves, there is not much that comes amiss to them. They are said to live principally upon mice and black beetles—it is all very well to try and make a non-fox-presenter believe such a thing, but a real fox-presenter knows better, and would be sorry to think that they got such a precarious living.

I had once a very good opportunity of watching their proceedings. A litter of cubs were laid up in a gravel-pit, on the side of a hill, within sight of my front door, and when they had grown big enough to come out of their earth and play about, I could see them quite distinctly with a telescope. I don't suppose that they had got many mice or black

beetles, but they seemed to take everything else that they could lay hands on, at least, their father and mother did.

They were particularly fond of some little white call ducks that I had, and from the fact of the said earth being within two hundred yards of a piece of water on which my little ducks used to breed, out of twenty-four they took eighteen, and I have more than once seen the little robbers dragging and carrying my poor little ducks about, and running after each other, and playing about with them in their mouths, in the middle of the day. It was a beautiful sight, I own, but a bore for my poor little ducks. It was such a pretty sight, and so seldom one which could be seen, except from such a position as the one I am writing of, that I wrote to West, who then hunted the Cottesmore hounds, and begged him to come over and have a look at them. This he did, and luckily, after much watching and waiting about, two of the little fellows put in an appearance. "Now then," I said, "let us go and see what they've got in their larder."

On arriving at the earth there were plenty of white feathers, legs and heads of hares and rabbits, and, *horribile dictu*, part of a lamb!

“Why, you don’t mean to say that foxes will eat lamb?” said I, appealing to West. “Well, not as a rule, sir,” said he, “unless they could get mint sauce with it; but, perhaps, they don’t often get lamb, and so they might be a bit extra hungry, and then, I dare say, they’d manage to get it down on a pinch.”

I don’t remember seeing any chickens’ remains there, but I have no doubt they got some sometimes for a change; for I remember asking one of my tenants, whom I met in a field, whether he had been making any complaints about the foxes, as many other farmers had done.

“Well, sir,” he said, “my mother is terribly put out about them, they’ve taken, she says, a hundred chickens this year, and that’s a good many in one year, you know, sir. We don’t mind about fifty or sixty chickens, but a hundred is rather too many.” “Well,” I said, “H——, did you say anything to the master?” meaning the master of the hounds. “Oh, yes, sir, I told him, but he don’t care about our chickens.” “Why, what did he say to you to make you think that?” “Oh, sir, all he said was, ‘You should shut your chickens up.’ ‘We do, sir,’ said I, ‘but they take them in the day-time.’”

‘Then, d——n you, you should not keep chickens at all.’”

It rather amused me, and no doubt the farmer thought it hard lines; but he was a real good fellow, and took the destruction of his mother’s chickens quite in good part, and as a matter of course.

I believe that a fox that has once tasted lamb becomes very fond of it, and will get one at times. I am sure that they are very fond of swans; perhaps they will hardly tackle an old cock swan, but that they will make sad havoc amongst cygnets I can say from experience, for they killed six that were half grown, by biting their heads off, in one season, and all were found within a few hundred yards of this house. In fact, they are like the tiger that is called a man-eater, and when once they find a dish that suits their palate they are very apt to order it for dinner more than is justifiable. A fox when pretty hungry, and more particularly a vixen that has cubs, will at times do very daring acts. Many years since, when at Erddig, near Wrexham, which is in Sir Watkin’s country, my mother-in-law was walking out with her little pet spaniel; the little dog, having got on rather ahead of her, set up the most heart-rending yells, and was evidently in great distress and shouting for

help. His mistress made the best of her way to his assistance, thinking that the poor little fellow must have got into a trap, but, to her horror and amazement, what should she meet in turning the corner of the gravel walk but a fox with him in her mouth, and doubtless bearing him off to her cubs.

After a good deal of crying out at him, and shaking of her parasol after the manner of ladies, and sundry ejaculations such as "Shoo!" "Shoo!" "Oh, don't take my little dog; naughty fox, get away!" and so forth, the dog was dropped, but the fox actually turned round and snarled at her. There was a good deal of impudence in the whole proceeding, as it seemed to me.

Foxes in this part of the world are supposed to live entirely upon flesh or fowl, and not in any way to partake of a vegetable diet. The story of the Fox and the Grapes is a fable known to all youngsters, and a fox eating grapes would seem a ridiculous idea; nevertheless in Germany and Switzerland and in countries where wine is made they are very troublesome, and often do a great deal of damage, and for this reason they are shot and persecuted in every way possible.

I remember when laid up with my injured hip in a town in Switzerland, named Yverdun, on the Lake of Neufchatel, there was a sort of club for shooting foxes, and on certain days when there was *chasse au renard*, the *chasseurs* used to sally forth into the vineyards under their leader, a certain Baron de Brackle, and sit for hours on a sort of three-legged milking stool, the legs of which could be doubled up, waiting till three or four little beagles, or dachshunds, drove the foxes past them.

When one was killed, and I have known them to kill as many as three or four on a good day, they used to hang them over their shoulders with their brushes almost dangling on the ground, and with the aforesaid milking stools strapped across their shoulder, parade them through the town. I twice brought home from Germany and Switzerland a cub, both of which were as tame as kittens. They both lived to a good age and remained as tame as they were when first I had them.

They liked rats and mice beyond all else, and they would eat grapes to any amount, but as Lincolnshire is not much of a grape country they did not get many of them, except as a very great treat or on their birthdays. However this shows that the fox and the



grapes has some truth or meaning in it, and is not altogether a fable.

Such a mischievous fellow as a fox is ought to be hunted. In the daytime he is a lazy rascal, and unless stopped out of his earth at night when he is committing his various larcenies and on his marauding expeditions, he will lie for hours curled up in his earth, or behind some large stump or in his "denno" of some kind. He is, moreover, better fitted for affording amusement than any other animal, and from the larking smell he has about him he is just the article made for sport.

When once he has been found, and scent is pretty good, he seems to know that if he don't make the best of his way and brush along he will probably come to grief and lose his brush. If scent is not good, he seems crafty enough to be aware of it, and will hang about, and give no sport, but a lot of trouble to both huntsman and hounds.

I remember well Colonel Lowther, of olden days, when a fox was hanging about and there was no scent to make him move, and people were saying what a bad fox he was, and that he must be so full of those beastly rabbits that he could hardly run, he tapped me on the shoulder with his whip, and said,

“ They can’t make him run if there is no scent. A good scent makes a good fox, Mr. C.” And no doubt this is the right construction to put upon the matter ; but even a bad scent and a bad fox seem to me more worthy objects than hunting an unfortunate stag, unless, like the fox, he is a wild one.

It seems to me legitimate to hunt any really wild animal found in a wild state ; and be it a flea that annoys you, or a bug that you find creeping stealthily away up the curtain in your lodgings in London, when you return at early dawn from a ball you have been attending, or if it should chance to be such an inferior animal as a louse, which has by some unknown accident got into your Indian gauze jersey, I say hunt him by all means, hunt him to death by every ruse you can, and when you’ve caught him, kill him—kill him and eat him, if you like, for he was a ‘wild fox, and therefore fair play.

Not so the poor stag, who in his natural state is one of the finest animals in the creation. What a noble fellow he looks, with his antlers stretching out so proudly, and seeming to bid defiance to all comers ! On the other hand, what a miserable devil he looks when he is got up for a meet of the stag-hounds at Salt Hill or Slough, and put into a cart





1. The antlered Monarch of the waste



2. The quondam antlered Monarch  
Non sum qualis eram

*To face page 83.*

and driven away to one of the aforesaid places like a culprit in olden days being taken to be hung at Tyburn. It is pitiable to think of the unpleasant feelings he must have on such occasions, with perhaps the assurance that if he goes well and gives a good run, he will be called upon to repeat the performance on the earliest day that he is refreshed enough with quiet and plenty of beans and such-like good things, to undertake another job. Where is that proud look that he was wont to have, as he tossed his antlered head in the air, and was ready to bid defiance to everything and everybody, and seemed to say "Come on!" It is all gone, and though his symmetry in other respects remains, he looks thoroughly ashamed of his appearance, and seems to feel that, if he had a more asinine tail, he might be taken for some costermonger's donkey out for a holiday. With his hair cut—that is to say, with horns cut off close, his brow antlers, which are his great protection and with which he might damage the hounds, served the same—he looks a perfect guy.

Having left his prison van, or what is called having been uncarterd, he is doomed to go somewhere, and after a short space of time the hounds are laid on.

Sometimes he makes the best of his way across the country ; sometimes he hangs about a good deal, and does not seem inclined to leave the said prison van. Persuasive measures are, however, soon taken to cause him to make a move of some kind, and thus a start is made.

I do not imagine that the poor fellow goes *con amore* ; he don't seem quite to like it, but as he is off, and as the hounds are after him, like a suspicious scamp in the streets he has got the hint to move on, and move on he must somewhere.

Being a stranger to the country, and being, like many others, left alone in the world, it does not signify to him much where he goes, so he goes straight forward, and knowing that he is pursued by the hounds, he makes the best of his way, and the more he gets alarmed the more he mends his pace.

With distance and pace, however, a stag even will tire, and as his pursuers are gradually drawing nearer, he is beginning to be in a bigger funk than he was at starting, and is on the look-out for any place to take refuge in. Sometimes he will try to get into some hovel or barn. If he gets to a village, he will try to get into any door that is open, and not unfrequently succeeds in finding the desired shelter in a blacksmith's

or a baker's shop ; nothing comes amiss to him in such a time of distress and fatigue. Should he not find hospitality at hand, he will often find his way to some pond, into which he will plunge, and there stand looking a most pitiable object, with the hounds baying round him, till the huntsman, or some other good Samaritan, having procured a rope, puts it round his antlerless head, and thus drags him to the shore.

Through sheer funk the fine animal has gone straight ahead, and has afforded the greatest gratification to all by having given a good run.

He is then again carted, and promised "a happy return of the day" should he survive his day's pleasuring. He, however, I fear, must feel himself sadly degraded in appearance, and cannot hold his head up as proudly as he was wont to do when he aspired to the title of the "antlered monarch of the waste."

Perhaps some of my readers may be stag-hunters, "calf-hunters," as they are often termed, and from the fact of there being no foxes in the country in which they live, and feeling it incumbent upon them to hunt something, *faut de mieux*, hunt the deer.

There cannot, as far as I can see, be the same pleasure in hunting a tame animal as there is in hunting a wild one, but all men have necks to break,

and unless they ride a steeplechase, or hunt a drag, having no foxhounds, the unfortunate stag is the only animal that is capable of leading them a dance in which they may show off their equestrian powers and ride against one another. I maintain that there cannot be the same excitement in taking a poor unfortunate tired stag in a duckpond or in a blacksmith's or baker's shop, let the pace and distance have been ever so good, as there would be in a much poorer run and killing your fox. Added to this, there surely must be some cruelty attached to the sport. I have heard it said that a stag don't mind being hunted, and that he rather enjoys it as a healthy exercise, as he seldom comes to real grief in the field, and when he is not required is taken the greatest care of and fed upon hay and beans, and, in fact, the best of everything, and treated like a hunter instead of a miserable half-tamed animal doomed to be periodically hunted. The question is, if a stag enjoys the sport he is compelled to make for others, why does he run from his pursuers? The answer must be that he runs away through fright, or what may be termed sheer funk. And surely this may be called cruelty to animals, and as far as I can see a most fitting subject for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which is so much



patronised by many of the nobility, gentry, and even royalty, of this land.

Many of my readers will no doubt say, whatever they may think, that my humble opinion of this matter is far-fetched, unreasonable, absurd, unjustifiable, and entirely obsolete, and altogether the misguided notion of a superannuated old fogey. There will, however, I feel sure, be many a soft and kind heart who will feel, as I do, compassion for the once noble and proud "antlered monarch of the waste."

## CHAPTER VI.

“TEMPORA MUTANTUR.”

TIMES and seasons pass away rapidly ; how rapidly, alas ! Times have changed, seasons seem changed, men and manners and everything seem to be changed, whether for better or worse I am hardly competent to say ; but I have a very strong suspicion that they are not for the better.

*Tempora*, times, customs of all kinds and sorts, *mutantur*, are changed, they are not the same as they used to be. *Nos et*, and we—we who are alive in 1886—are not the same as we were in 1830. The “three score years and ten” have come upon us, and we are no longer the same kind of beings that we can remember ourselves to have been ; we have been changed, *ab illis*, by them, by the lapse of years that have imperceptibly rolled over our heads. We are not able to ride or drive, or shoot or fish, or to

sit out all night in a gunning punt to be half frozen to death, as we were wont to do. But we are still made, as the Italians say, *di la steppa pasta*, and it delights us to think upon the times now past and gone, and to remember what joyous days they were.

That times have changed for the worse seems to me not to admit of an argument. The times I allude to were good old times. Now, in 1886, no one will, I think, dispute that they are deuced bad. In the good old times the farmer and his landlord were, as a general rule, on the best of terms, and he stood with his hat in his hand begging the squire to let him his land, and the landlord's wishes were what he looked up to. This was the feeling in the good old days. Now the prophecy of Nixon has actually come to pass, and this was, “The landlord shall stand with his hat in his hand begging his tenants to hold his land.” Yes, to hold his land! and to almost dictate to him what terms to make, or he will throw up his farm upon the slightest difference of opinion, or, what he considers, provocation.

At present, with the so-called liberal feelings that have grown up with the bad times, with that most absurd hares and rabbits imposition, or, what it is thought smarter to call, the “Ground Game Act,”

the world seems to be turned upside down ; whether it will ever right itself is a thing to be seen, but being round, it may do so in time. They do say " A good time is coming, boys," but it seems to be somewhat long on the road, and it would appear somewhat odd if the very Liberal measure of trapping and persecuting hares and rabbits, to the annoyance of most country gentlemen and landlords, whose sport ought to be encouraged instead of condemned, will not in the long run materially interfere with, if not greatly spoil, that most noble of all sports, fox-hunting, and which is at present the pride of England and its aristocracy. There have, no doubt, always been a certain number of foxes that have met with little accidents, but from the care that has, as a general rule, been taken of them, comparatively few, I am happy to think, have come to grief through the negligence or wilful acts of gentlemen's keepers. More, I feel sure, have suffered from the practice of setting traps for rats round corn-stacks and on lands where there have been no keepers, and from farm-servants trapping for hares and rabbits in their runs, than from any other cause. Now that the absurd Ground Game Act has become law, I much fear that many gamekeepers will feel less pride and

responsibility attached to their situations, and that farmers, and those employed by them, from want of knowledge of an art which is a clever one, will cause much mischief; and I fear that the fox of 1886 cuts a worse figure than he did in 1830, and for many years before and after that remote date.

Foxes are, perhaps, of all cunning animals the most cunning, "and cunning as a fox," whether applied to men or animals, means that they are down to every move, and what is called up to snuff. What can illustrate this more than the fact, which, no doubt, many besides myself have observed, that coverts for a great distance may be drawn blank; at last a fox is found; sweet music, as a natural consequence, fills the air, and in the very coverts where no fox was to be found, two or three, or even more, are soon on foot. Where have they been? Where have they stowed themselves away? I have sometimes thought that they must get up into the trees, but, as no one has ever seen a fox climb like a squirrel, that cannot be the case. They do, however, get themselves out of the way at times when they are most wanted in a most marvellous and unaccountable manner.

I remember the Lothian hounds at a meet at Hopetown House, in Linlithgowshire, drawing a

covert, called the bog, which was as thick as any covert well could be with rhododendrons and other shrubs, and which was always reckoned a sure find. It was thoroughly well drawn; but no, on the day in question, he was not there: it was blank, or supposed to be. The hounds were taken away to try another covert. Before they had gone a quarter of an hour some men who had been working near, having armed themselves with two long poles, which had been left standing against the side of an ice-house covered with thatch and at which they had been employed, began to poke them into the top of an old bathing-house which stood against a wall close to the sea-shore, and which was covered over with ivy and very thick brambles. After a few pokes into this almost impenetrable place, to their astonishment out jumped two foxes. They, of course, went through the form of yelling and making every kind of unearthly noise, but to no purpose, as the hounds had been gone out of hearing for some time. I did not see the foxes jump out myself, but, whilst they were drawing the covert, I did see the hounds within five or six yards of where they must have been lying, to say nothing of people talking all around them, cracking of whips, and such proceedings. This will

show that a fox will lie still till he is actually poked up, till he is "stirred up with a long pole." We all know the saying, "Stir him up, Jack, with a long pole," and in this case it was successful.

So many accidents happen to the poor fox that it is impossible to name what kind of scrawls he may get into, but I will name two which came under my own eye and observation about the year 1824, when quite a little chap at my first school, and home for the holidays, and out with my father on my pony to what is called see the hounds, in the time when old George Slack was huntsman to the Cottesmore.

A fox was found in either Castle Dykes or Newall. He ran very badly and was very lame, and in about ten minutes was run into crossing the Stanford and Holywell road, when, to the surprise of all beholders, he had only one reliable foot to go upon, his two fore-pads and one of his hind ones had a snare on, which was imbedded in the flesh. I remember well one was in a much more inflamed, or I may term it festering, state, than the two others, which were nearly covered, and seemed to be partially healed and fairly sound over the snares. The mystery is how did he get three of his pads into the snares, and having got

them on how did he manage to run at all—how did he find his living during such a time as he must have spent, and how was it that he was not consumed away by pain and sorrow? He however did not seem to ail anything but that he was unable to run. All these queries, good reader, are for you to decide, I can only say what I saw.

Some years after the story of the fox with the snares on his pads, another somewhat curious accident happened to a vixen, who did her very best to save her brush. We had run our fox for a long while, and were, as we thought, about to kill her. We ran her into Turnpole Wood, where, in the days I am speaking of, there were sundry holes or openings, which were called swallow-holes, and which were as much as seven, or from that to ten feet deep, and as large as a small room, quite as large as a loose-box for a horse. Into one of these, being sorely pressed, she went head foremost, and five or six hounds after her. It was growing quite dusk—what was to be done? Our fox was down, and so were five or six hounds! The place was too deep to get down into without some other aid than hands, and perhaps a spare stirrup leathers, of which the huntsman and whips always carried one. The edict therefore went out, “Jack,”



meaning Jack Abbey, "you must go to Pickworth and ask Mr. Thraves to lend you a ladder and some ropes and a lantern, and don't forget to bring a tinder-box and some matches, in case the lantern should go out."

In those days lucifer matches were not born, and a flint and steel and some burnt rag in a flat tin box was the only way that the housemaid in the morning had to light a fire, with the assistance of some thinly split deal, cut to a point, which had been dipped into melted brimstone.

After waiting, as we thought, a long while—for a "watched kettle," they say, never boils—Jack Abbey appeared, riding with the ladder over his shoulder, and the ropes and horn lantern, and a lot of tallow dip-candles strapped on the front of his saddle. All being ready, Lambert descends, and in a short time up comes a hound, the rope having been made fast to one pair of couples, then another, and then another, till all the lost hounds are safely out of the said "swallow-hole." Only one hound was a little hurt, which seemed a marvel, as it was a real nasty place for anything to go down head-first, which all must have done. The hounds being all pretty safely got out, the next inquiry was, Where is

the fox? and Lambert, after exploring this cavern, for it could come under no other name, at last found him stowed away in a crevice of the rock, in an almost inaccessible place. He, after several attempts, managed to get the thong of his whip, which he had doubled up for the occasion, round his neck, and, by a great effort, and making an extra long arm, he managed to get hold of his brush, and had got him nearly out, when, wondrous to relate, his brush snapped short off about half way up! He, however, declared he'd sooner spend the night there than not get his fox out; and this, after a great deal of perseverance and scheming, and with the help of Jack Abbey, he eventually did; and finding that it was a vixen, it was decided that she should not suffer the penalty of death, but that she should be turned up again to fight another day—as she had been a real good one, and had, after having given a good run, done the best she could to “save her brush,” and in this she partly succeeded.

She was, therefore, let go on her way rejoicing, and we proceeded to our respective homes.

It was as dark as pitch before we got out of Turnpole Wood, and I only wonder that we did find our way out.

The cavern was a curious place, the sides green, and dripping with wet, and part of the top, or roof, had stalactites hanging from it. I believe that since those days all the swallow-holes have been filled in, as they were most dangerous places. What they had been, what they really were, whether they had been made, or whether they were natural cavities, no one ever seemed to know.

When our fox got into this scrape it was thought out of the question to get him out, and though many that were out stopped to witness the proceedings, as the evening came on they one by one dropped off home, and wished us good night, never expecting that even Lambert's keenness and determined spirit would induce him to stay down in such a place for fully two hours longer. This, however, Lambert and I did, and till Jack Abbey also came down and helped to secure the fox, I making myself also useful by holding the lantern.

"You must have the brush, sir," said Lambert, presenting me with an affair about the length of a good-sized shaving-brush. This, accordingly, I had mounted when I got home, and it was most religiously kept for years, on one of the library bookshelves at

Holywell Hall, with a suitable description of the case written on the handle.

The vixen to whom this sad and curious accident happened lived for some years, and whenever she was found, the chances were that she led them a dance, for, having only half a brush to carry, she was, as I have heard pretty often said of other vixens, "light in the tail," and she could go the pace with less distress than with a whole brush. She eventually met with a still more serious *contretemps*: she was chopped in Newhall Wood, and I was sorry when I heard the news of my old friend's death, when I was told, "We've chopped the bob-tailed fox."

Times are, indeed, changed, and many things take place now that were never thought of in the days long ago. Most gentlemen would ride to covert on their hacks, and, having got off them and discarded their mud-boots, would mount their hunter, and having got as much out of him as they conscientiously could do, would either, having put up their hack at some appointed place, ride home on him, or, more probably, ride their hunter home, which, if he was tired, and a bit sticky after his day's amusement, was a great bore.

Some rich swell would sometimes have his groom in livery riding along the lanes, and keeping his

master in sight, on a fresh horse. But this was an exception to the general rule ; and unless a man was a heavy weight, or a lump of a fellow, like Maxe or Lord Alvanley, it was a very uncommon practice for any one to have what is now called “my second horseman.” In these days, however, things are changed, and my second horseman seems to be a *sine quâ non* with all who are able to afford such an incumbrance, and who looks more like a hunting parson than a servant ; and who, as long as his master is any way near, is orderly and well conducted as a rule, and may generally be recognised as to his avocation by having a leather case for sandwiches and sherry strapped around his waist ; for since the time I have before named, when the swell parson got the name of the “licensed victualler,” it has become quite a common thing to see a second horseman with his master’s luncheon buckled round his waist, and to hear the master greeting for his porridge. “Have you seen my servant ? Have you seen my second horseman ? I wonder where the devil the fellow can be ; he’s got my luncheon, and I am almost famishing.”

Now, useful as these second horsemen may be when they keep in their proper places and keep a

good look-out for their master's requirements, they are very often a great nuisance to farmers and occupiers of land ; for when their masters are out of sight they become somewhat unruly, and do incalculable damage by the reckless way in which they ride over the cropping, swinging gates off their hinges, and leaving gates open everywhere in their route, and letting the farmers' stock out of their proper quarters. They seem utterly regardless of the damage they are doing, and the annoyance and inconvenience they are causing to tenants, whenever they honour their farms with a visit.

Farmers themselves, as a body, are glad to see the hounds crossing their fields ; but they do not much care to see a lot of servants, second horse-men, riding all over the fields, instead of keeping on the roads, which is their proper place. This nuisance, for it is nothing else, is more felt in a woodland country than it is in Leicestershire, or in a grass country, from the fact that a fox must go away somewhere, and cannot hang about and take his time from wood to wood, which entails a great deal of riding across fields, by those who constitute the nuisance I am speaking of.

I should not have written so much upon the

subject of second horsemen, did I not know that I was speaking the sentiments of the generality of farmers and tenants, and even landlords, who are so hard pressed by the bad times, that they can ill afford to have extra and wilful damage done through wilful carelessness.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PUNT SHOOTING.

Good reader, if you have never sat all night long shivering in a gunning punt in the winter, I should strongly advise you not to try it, unless you are made of very patient and very tough materials. I have heard the game of cricket designated as a “hot and dangerous pastime”; you will find gunning quite the reverse, and it may justly be termed “a cold and dangerous pastime”; but it has its charms, and in spite of cold, and frost, and snow, it is a sport that, more than any, grows upon one. There is something most exciting, on a still, starlight or moonlight night in winter, in sitting in a punt and hearing the different calls and notes of wild birds, and the whistling of their wings as they come in flocks from distant parts and from miles out at sea to their feeding-grounds. I know nothing finer than the sound



produced by your piece of wildfowl artillery at a time when dead silence prevails all around. There is something very grand in the boom produced by sixteen ounces of shot, with three ounces of powder behind it, on a still night, as the said sound echoes along the shore, and gradually dies away in the distance, till all again is as still as death itself. The professional gunner and the amateur gunner are two distinct species of animal. The former always uses a single-handed punt, and by which means he can work himself up to his birds as he likes. The amateur gunner generally uses a double-handed punt, and is always more or less at his punter's mercy, and is dependent upon him I may say in everything, except the actual manipulation of his gun. It is seldom that the man working the boat sees the same line of birds in the same light as the man who is lying down to his gun. The saying that "two heads are better than one" does not, in my humble opinion, always apply to a gunning punt, and many is the time that I have wished my man dead and buried because I could not make him understand which line of birds I wanted to loose off at, he from his position seeing, perhaps, only half as many in a line as I could. The line of fowl, though they may not be very near each

other is what has to be considered. Many young beginners, or those who are not used to such a delicate art, fancy that because they have a flock of fifty or sixty ducks before them they have nothing to do but say, "Share it amongst you;" whereas an old hand will see his line in a moment, and what is called "cut a gutter through them"; and if he can't get a line of birds he will either not pull at all, or wait patiently till he sees a good opportunity to dispense his favours amongst them. Old Sam Singer, who was, perhaps, the best gunner extant, said to me one day that he never pulled unless he was quite sure of getting six or seven.

I remember meeting the said old Sam Singer one morning on the Firth of Forth; he had been out all night, and was slowly paddling his punt home to Kincardine with the tide. I was in a small steam yacht, on which I carried my double-handed punt, and which was then towing behind the yacht. I hailed the old fellow and took him on board. It was a real cold morning. "Will you have something to eat, Sam?" said I. "Well, thank you, sir, I don't mind if I do; for I'm pretty hungry, I can tell you. I finished my bit of plum-pudding and my rum-and-water long afore it was light, and as I've been out

all night, I feels pretty sharp, I can tell 'e." A piece of plum-pudding and a half-pint bottle of rum-and-water was old Sam's allowance for the night, and this he always took with him in his ammunition-box, and said it seemed "to stick by him" better than anything else. Having regaled himself with some cold partridge-pie and a cup of hot tea, he began: "Well, this is good luck! I began to feel as if I was half starving. But, oh dear! to think of my being here eating partridge-pie and drinking tea on board your yacht. Why, the people at Kincardine would think as I was a gentleman if they could only see me. I have not tasted anything like this since I was in Holland, and used to go with the Prince of Orange and Lord John Scott." Then, all of a sudden, changing the subject, he said, "Pray, sir, do you think it wrong to swear?" "Well, Sam," I said, "I've been told so. But why?" "Well, sir, do you know, if I hadn't been able to have sworn I do think I should have heaved her" (meaning his gun) "overboard this morning; but swearing seemed to do me a sight of good, and I didn't." "What were you going to throw her overboard for?" said I. "Well, you know, sir, I'd been out all night, and precious cold it was. I'd ate all my pudding, and

drank all my rum-and-water, and just at grey I comes upon a lot of widgeon; they was sitting as thick together as ever they could sit, and in that gutter that runs from the old distillery—you knows it. I pulled, and——” “Oh, you need not say any more,” said I, “she missed fire.” “Yes, that’s it,” said Sam, “and I do believe if I could not have sworn I should have heaved her overboard. I suppose it ain’t right to swear, but it did seem to relieve me wonderful.”

Old Sam Singer had gone through “the changes and chances of this mortal life” as much as most men. At one time of day he was a great man, a great authority about gunning in Colonel Hawker’s time, and no doubt quite a first-rate hand at wildfowl of all kinds. He had been to Holland, and in the pay of the Prince of Orange, and come home with a gold watch and chain, which had been presented to him whilst in his service. All this made him hold his head pretty high for a time, and he used to be “a bit of a swell,” as he told me himself. He used to shoot a good deal about the Southampton Waters, and was well known to Colonel Hawker, and all gunners about there, as quite an authority. He told me that, when gunners became so numerous

in those parts, he came away, and, as he termed it, "the place was fairly shot out," and you could not get a shot in peace ; for some fellow was always stowed away in a punt, go where you would. Thus he turned his head to the north, and took up his abode at Kincardine, on the Firth of Forth, and for some time he did pretty well, and made a fair livelihood by sending his birds to Edinburgh and Glasgow markets. But things went wrong ; he married a woman who kept a small shop ; people ran up bills which were never paid ; and he came to beggary, in which state he died, I am told.

There is a good deal of writing in these days about punts, and guns, and wildfowl shooting ; and in many of the breechloading systems, a great deal of rubbish and most dangerous modes of actions—systems of easing the recoil, and so forth—which are simply good for nothing, the easing the recoil of a punt gun being one of the simplest things in the world, if properly done and proper precautions taken. But into this I shall not enter, and will only say, you may play with a lion, or a tiger, but you must not play with a stanchion gun, lest you should have all your teeth drawn, yourself knocked into next week, and turned out of your boat.

To have much success in gunning, and most especially in night shooting, it is positively necessary that a man should be well acquainted with his ground. Unless this is the case, it is impossible for him to get on at all. He must know what places the fowls frequent to feed, and to which they come from many miles out at sea. He must know every creek and corner, which, unless he is an *habitué* of the place, he cannot find out. He must also know what the state of the tides are, or he will find himself left high and dry. Thus you will find that the professional gunner, who shoots for his bread-and-butter, generally lives on the spot, and works his own punt.

It is now some years since I spent some weeks at Inverness for wildfowl shooting. I shot some ducks and widgeon on the Moray Firth, when it did not blow too hard, which it often did. I also got some Brent geese—*Anser bernicla*, Lin.—which most people call barnacles ; and in Ireland they call them Wexford barnacles.

I did not do anything very great, for the weather was very open, and when this is the case fowl do not get down to the water's edge as they do in hard weather ; to say nothing of their being much more wide-awake when they can get their food easily

than when they have to work for it, which they have to do when the shores are covered with ice, and hard.

Knowing that Cromarty Bay was a noted place for geese and all kinds of fowl, I went there; but I found that there were at least three or four professional men there, and so I steamed back to Inverness, and hearing a wonderful account of a place called Munlochy Bay, I repaired thither, intent upon doing great things. The first night I went there, knowing nothing of the country, I went up the bay about flight time, and the quantity of widgeon that came in was perfectly marvellous; they came in, flock after flock, as fast as they could come, for nearly half an hour. But I could not hear any of them "pitch"; and though I went some way up the said bay, I never could make out where they went to; but, wherever they did go to, they must have been in hundreds upon hundreds, or for anything I know in thousands. Two or three days after this, I made a purpose journey in the day-time to try and find where they all fed at night; but from the state of the weather it was impossible to get far enough up the bay to find out their ground. We had anchored my little yacht at the entrance of the

bay, in a bit of water running up behind a kind of spit of land ; and having got into the punt, with gun and everything ready, in case we might see any ducks, we went a good distance up the water. The weather began to look very threatening, and it began to blow ; and evidently there was a snowstorm coming over the distant hills, so we thought it prudent to turn back. All of a sudden the wind came down upon us in a perfect hurricane, and the snow came drifting along the water, which was lashed up into a white foam. What was to be done, with a heavy gun and two in the punt ? It would be out of the question attempting to round the point to where the yacht was at anchor. "We can't get round the point," said my man ; "we shall be swamped if we try." "Then run her ashore straight," said I ; and this was accordingly done, and on the nose of the punt touching the shore, out we got, without further damage than being wet through, the punt filled with water, and the gun and other things being also as wet as we were. The men of my yacht, who were in shelter of the "spit of land," and who were watching us, soon came to our aid, when the gun was taken out, and, with the other things, carried across to the sheltered side ;



and when the storm abated the punt was rowed round, hung up to the davits, and we retraced our steps to Inverness, feeling somewhat glad that we had not been swamped, for it all but came to that. And thus I think I may fairly say that it was a "cold and dangerous pastime." The Italians have a saying, which is, "*Nessun rosa senza spina*" ("There is no rose without a thorn"), which I conclude means, everything has some drawback.

I must now introduce you to an amusing accident which happened to me. Having gone some distance up the Beauley Firth, we let go the yacht's anchor, and I and my man got into the punt, and proceeded on our way to where we heard some widgeon. They were a long way up, but we could hear them "all of a charm"—a gunner's term for widgeon on the feed, with no cause for any alarm about them. We occasionally stopped and listened, for we had heard some seals making a desperate and unearthly kind of noise. All of a sudden I thought I heard ducks splashing about and washing, and then quietly feeding on the shore, not a long way off. "Why, surely," I said, in the lowest of whispers, "those must be ducks feeding inside of us." Accordingly, having made up our minds on this knotty point, we agreed that ducks

close at hand were as good, if not better, than widgeon fully a mile off. Accordingly, having taken the cover, which was part of an old water-boot, off my gun, and having put in a copper primer, which I always did the last thing before going into birds, we got down in the punt, and were ready for action.

The night was very dark, almost too dark to see anything, but there were a few stars overhead, and I could hear their beaks dibbling in the mud quite distinctly, but the deuce a thing of any kind could I see. I put up my opera glasses, which I always carried at night, and I thought I could see a something that moved. I felt pretty sure I was near enough, so I whispered, "Shove in one stroke nearer, if you possibly can, and I'll shoot to the sound, for I'm blessed if I can see them." Accordingly, giving a tap on the bottom boards with the toe of my water-boots, just to make them set their heads up, "Look out," said I, and off she went. I shall never forget the noise the gun made in the silence of the night, nor the noise that was to be heard as soon as *that* noise had cleared off. I had killed some ducks of some kind, that was quite certain, and there seemed a good many.

“Shove the punt’s nose aground, and nip out quick,” said I, for I heard the cripples flapping and paddling off as hard as they could go across the mud. “Go after the cripples, never mind the dead ones, they’ll take care of themselves.” Accordingly, as we got on shore, “Well,” I said, “are there many?” “Ay, maun, the place is all over decks.” “Well, get what you can, and chuck them into the punt to me; I’ll soon slip their necks for them; and be sure and get all the cripples you can first,” and as he brought the poor wretches to me I slipt their necks. This is rather an art, and very few can do it. I, however, learnt it of a decoy man. “But, man alive!” said he, “what have we gotten here? Surely them’s twa young swarns?” As soon as I saw them I knew what had happened. “Never mind the swans,” said I, “put them in the punt.” By this time he had got as many cripples as he could, and the rest were still holloaing and flapping all over the mud. There seemed to be “decks” everywhere, but as they had gone to every point of the compass, and the mud was pretty deep, he said he was quite beaten to find them, as it was very dark.

I perceived at once, when I saw the “twa young swarns,” that I had killed somebody’s tame Aylesbury ducks, with fine coral-coloured bills, and nearly as big

as geese ; in fact, I had shot into a lot of tame ducks which ought to have been in bed asleep, but instead had wandered away on to the shore, far from any house.

However, the noise that the cripples made flapping and quacking over the mud had disturbed one of the old wives, and we saw a light in a house on shore, and a voice, in by no means a pleasing tone, holloaing out, "What are ye doing with my decks, ye scoundrels ! Let my decks alone, I tell ye ! I ken fine where ye come from—ye come from Beauley ; I ken ye fine, ye blackguards !" And all the time we were receiving her blessings she was to be heard tramping towards us through the mud. We, however, got quietly back into the punt. I said to my man, "Don't say a word, or make the slightest noise," and we shoved off and floated down with the tide towards my yacht, leaving the irate old lady to imagine, if she chose, that we had gone back to Beauley.

I was really sorry to think that I had made such a mistake, but it was the ducks' fault, not mine. They had no business to be almost a mile from home on a dark night.

In addition to the "twa young swarns" there were seven others, of different kinds, some half-bred

muscovies, of huge dimensions, and some common tame ducks. Having got back to the yacht, and having been duly congratulated by my crew, I said to my man, "And now I should like to know what I am to do with these?" "Man," said he, "why, of course you will be sending them to your freends." "No," I said, "these fellows must never go on shore; but if you and the men like to have them, and will pluck them at once, and put their feathers into the stoke-hole fire, you may have them and do what you like with them." Nobody could swear to them with their coats off, but they might if they had them on. Accordingly, they were divested of their jackets, and the crew divided them, and, I suppose, ate them, for I never asked any more questions about them.

About two years after this unfortunate accident to the tame ducks, when at the hotel at Lairg, for fishing in Loch Shin, which, by the way, was one of the most comfortable fishing quarters I know of, I met a very pleasant gentleman on the same errand as myself. We were talking over fishing, comparing notes, examining flies, and so forth, when the conversation turned to Cromarty Bay, and shooting Brent geese with a punt gun. He said he'd a little

bit of a hut, in which he kept a gunning punt, from which he often shot widgeon, which were pretty plentiful there. I said, "I dare say you know then a little fellow named Danny McCree?" "Oh, yes," he said, "he often gets a shot with my punt; he's a very good hand. By the by, he told me a most amusing story about a gentleman who shot into a lot of tame ducks by mistake in Beauley Firth, but I never could make out who it was." "Oh!" said I, "you needn't go any further for that, for it was myself; and I told the story to Danny McCree." "By Jove," said he, "now that I know and have seen the man who did it, I think I ought to die happy. For though everybody around had heard of it, yet nobody seemed to know who the perpetrator was." We parted the best of friends, and I have never seen him since. No doubt he often regaled others with my exploit, as the story was too good to be kept secret.

Whilst speaking of Sam Singer, I forgot to mention that he was the inventor of the compass called "Singer's compass," which is used in the navy and by almost all nautical men. From being partly made on the face of mother of pearl, it shines in the dark; and when no other compass can be read

Singer's can be seen distinctly. He took out a kind of patent for it, and he was to have made his fortune by it; but, alas! for poor old Singer, those that got hold of his invention promised everything and performed nothing. It is often the case that an honest man finds brains, and that dishonest men make use of them; so it was in this case. The poor old fellow, from trusting too much to their sense of righteous dealing, was fairly swindled out of his invention; and at last, if he wanted a "Singer's compass" for himself he would have to buy one. The poor old man was all but mad upon the subject, and I never met him but he would spin me a yarn about the injustice he had received. And I do verily believe that the constant anxiety of mind, and fretting over the case, had very much assisted Anno Domini in making him more infirm and aged than he would otherwise have been, for though an old man he was made of very tough materials. When I last saw him he looked more like some antediluvian remains of a man that had been dug out of an Irish peat bog than anything else, for he was pretty near skin and bone; and when I told him how dried up and bad he looked, he said, "Oh! did not you hear what a lot of blood

I lost when they found me in my punt, and thought as I was dead." The fact was that even the great Sam Singer had forgotten one night to put the pin into an iron ring that he tethered his gun with, and on firing it it ran back, and drew what few teeth he had, made his nose and mouth bleed, all but turned him out of his boat, and left him insensible in the bottom of it, where he was found and conveyed home next morning. "But how did you manage to forget to tether your gun properly?" said I. "You might have been killed outright. As it was she played you an ugly trick." "Yes," said Sam; "the ruling passion being strong in death. It was an ugly trick; but not half as bad as the trick those fellows played me about my compass."



## CHAPTER VIII.

### FIREARMS, AND THE USE AND ABUSE OF THEM.

THAT firearms of all kinds are dangerous, I think no one will dispute, and that wherever gunpowder is present there is a certain degree of risk attending it. From the tiny brass cannon, which the little boy with any Guy Fawkes inclination delights to fire, and is never satisfied, or thinks it properly loaded, unless it rears up and stands on end and bounds, tumbling head over heels for two or three yards, to the imminent danger of his little brothers and sisters, who are congregated just behind it, and enjoying the fun—from this tiny piece of brass ordnance to the largest Armstrong gun, there is danger more or less, which was sadly proved on board H.M.S. *Thunderer*. Accidents occur from no apparent cause sometimes, and therefore guns and gunpowder are dangerous things to play with.

So much has been written about guns of late, and such numerous plans for making them safe have been adopted, that one would imagine that a gun could not possibly go off by accident. Such, however, is not the case, and I believe there are more accidents now than there used to be forty or fifty years ago, for the simple reason that people are less careful, and from fancying that their guns can't misbehave take liberties with them which are unjustifiable.

It is always the safe and unloaded gun that shoots people ; and it is always the quietest and most reliable horse you have in your stable that shies at something, gets into a fright, and kicks your gig or carriage to pieces. A man may be dangerous with his gun, and blow his own brains out, if it suits him to do so, and provided he has any ; but he has no right to put his neighbour's life in jeopardy from being careless of his own. Breechloaders are, no doubt, a great improvement upon muzzle-loaders, or the now obsolete flint and steel, inasmuch as that now impossible feat of stuffing a gun at the muzzle is done away with, or nearly so. A breechloader, however, is no safer than either of the former plans when once it is loaded, unless the person who shoots with it is safe himself. If he carries his gun at full cock all day long, and carries it

pointed at his next-door neighbour, I call him a dangerous fellow, whoever he may be. But go out any day with a party, and you will always find at least two or three who seem perfectly unaware that they are doing anything dangerous by carrying their guns with the muzzles low, at full cock, and pointed at the middle of the stomach of the beater or keeper next to them. If it is not pointed at about the second button of the unfortunate fellow's waistcoat, you will see it on a level with the calves of his legs. The poor fellow dare not say, "Please, sir," or "Please, my lord, hold your gun up," but he must often think a good deal, and feel if it did go off he would probably be nowhere. That accidents do happen, and will for ever happen, in the best regulated families, there is no doubt, but it is a sad thing when they occur through carelessness.

I once knew a gentleman who was one of the best, if not the best, shot in England, who met with a terrible accident—not through carelessness, for he was one of the most careful men possible. He put up his gun to shoot at a rabbit in some turnips, a boy who was with him ducked for him to shoot over his head. Just as he caught sight of the rabbit again the poor boy popped up his head, and he cut a gutter

through his head, just like a draining-tile cut down the centre, and killed him dead upon the spot.

There would seem to be a special providence who watches over some people that are careless with their guns, and who, from over excitement perhaps, or from not being aware of the danger of the weapon they carry, shoot at random at everything they see that is within distance; in fact, who lose sight of everything but the object they wish to fire at. I had once so narrow an escape myself, that the relation of it may be amusing and not out of place.

It is now many years since that I was shooting at Normanton Park in Rutlandshire, with the then Sir Gilbert Heathcote, afterwards Lord Aveland. There had been a sudden fall of snow during the night, and the rabbits had cut several pads or runs in it. We were four guns, and one of them was Baron Park, afterwards Lord Wensleydale. He and Sir Gilbert Heathcote walked in a line with the beaters down a narrow slip of young larch plantation, at the end of which I and the other gun were posted. When they had got to within ten yards of me a rabbit got up, and ran down one of the aforesaid pads as if he meant to charge me; it had got to within a yard of me, and my impulse was to give

him a kick. I saw that the Baron was intent on mischief, and was poking at him with his gun ; and I was thinking to myself, "What an old fool you must be to poke at anything so near another person's legs." I could not suppose that he was thinking of firing ; but this was his intention, for crack went the cap, and his gun, which I well remember was made by Blanch, of Fleet Street, had missed fire. The affair took me so completely by surprise, that there was no time to jump about, or turn round, or call out to him, "Don't shoot here ! Mind where you're shooting !" and so forth. Certain however it is, that had his old "Blanch" gone off, I should not only have been cut off my legs, but very probably killed outright. "Well," I said, turning to a gentleman who was standing close to me, and who was no less than Sir Gilbert Heathcote's son, now Lord Aveland, "what do you think of that ?" "Think of that ?" he said. "Why, if his gun had gone off he would have cut you in halves." So also said Peach, the head keeper, who was walking by the worthy Baron's side, when I said to him, "Peach, did you see that gun miss fire ?" "Indeed, I did, sir," said he ; "and I expected to see you fall dead." I may here mention that the Peaches were keepers on the estate for

generations. The father of the man I have named was shot by a poacher and left for dead, being horribly mutilated; he, however, ultimately recovered. He was well enough to give his evidence, and the poacher was convicted, and hanged in front of Oakham gaol.

Accidents with guns happen in so many various ways, that one wonders that they are not of daily occurrence. One hears of an accident from a person pulling his gun through a hedge by laying hold of the muzzle; one also hears of a person being shot dead by a friend holding the muzzle to him to pull him up a ditch or bank. Any one that is so heedless, and so ignorant of the danger he incurs by such a proceeding, cannot be surprised at the result.

All guns in these days are supposed to be made upon the latest and most improved safety principles. Still, when once a gun is cocked, it is no safer than if it was made of any obsolete mechanism. I mean, flint and steel, copper cap, copper tube, Forsyth's or Egg's, or any other principle that has been invented for certainty and quickness of loading and ignition. The danger of a gun lies in the trigger, and on whatever principle it is made, if the said weapon is

on full cock, and the trigger pressed, off she goes, to a certainty. Dangerous as they always must be, the only real prevention or safety is—never on any occasion to point a gun, loaded or unloaded, at anybody; and when shooting to carry the muzzle up, and not in a line with your friends' or the beaters' stomachs. Quick loading, quick shooting, and a great deal of jealousy is the order of the present day; and I will venture to say that in any large shooting party there will always be found two or three what are called keen shots—but for which I will write “jealous” shots—who make themselves remarkable and disagreeable by walking out of line, and with both barrels cocked, and their fingers on the triggers, swing their guns to and fro like a gardener with a water syringe watering his young carnations, or some of his beloved tender plants. The practice in one case is good and necessary, but in the other most reprehensible, and in no way necessary or comfortable to a person's abdominal viscera, should she chance to go out with you.

To show how an accident may happen where there is no carelessness, I will relate one that might have been very serious. Mr. Guildford Onslow, of Tichborne fame, who was an old friend of mine, used, as

I did on the Lago Maggiore, to shoot on the Lago di Como. He was one day unloading his punt gun, which had missed fire from the touch-hole getting clogged. He had got out a good deal of the powder with his copper loading-spoon, and was trying, with the muzzle of the gun between his knees, to loosen the powder in the chamber in the breech with his loading-rod, which had an iron or steel worm to it. All of a sudden off went the gun. Luckily he was not standing in front of it, or no doubt the loading-rod would have gone through him, as it was blown away to a considerable distance. As it luckily turned out he was not seriously hurt, but his hands were burnt, and he bore the marks of the powder on the back of them and his fingers to the day of his death.

He was a capital sportsman in every way, a very good shot, a first-rate fisherman. He was a great friend and supporter of Sir Roger Tichborne, and one of his great reasons used to be that he was such a first-rate sportsman. "Why," he used to say to me, "I thought that you and I could fish as well as any one else, but we can't do anything against Tichborne. The way in which he handles his gun, the way in which he throws a fly, the very way in which he takes off his hat to a lady, prove that he is a gentleman.



No Wapping butcher could do all these things as he does." He felt sure that, from his dexterity in fishing, from his prowess with his gun, and from his refined manner in pulling off his hat, he must have been born a gentleman, that he could not by any possibility be a butcher—*ergo*, he must be the right man, that is, Sir Roger Tichborne.

Powder need not necessarily be in a gun to cause an accident. I remember when almost a boy, and with my brothers out shooting, one of them thinking he might run short of powder, after having shaken his flask and not being quite satisfied as to its contents, unscrewed the top, when a spark from a cigar he was smoking fell into it, and there was, of course, a real blow up. The flask was blown to pieces over the hedge, his hair and face considerably singed and scarified, but no one killed or seriously injured. This was most providential, and the same good Providence has watched over him since, for he was second in command of the Grenadier Guards at the Alma, and commanded them at Inkerman.

That guns and powder and shooting are all dangerous affairs, I think has been pretty clearly set forth. Shooting is at times a sport which may produce mischief and accidents, which do not depend upon the

fact of the ignition of the dangerous mixture called gunpowder.

When living on Lake Constance, I received a message from an English friend that a certain piece of land which had been covered by the water caused by the melting of the snows on the mountains was full of snipe—as Paddy would say, “just louzey with them.” Accordingly, thither we repaired in our punts ; he and his German *jäger* in one, and I and my English servant in the other. We pulled down the river for four or five miles, and arriving at the spot prepared for action. Of course, as is customary on such occasions, the snipe had been there, but, as is also customary on such occasions, they were gone, and had only, like little Bo-Peep’s sheep, left their tails behind them, which spoke most eloquently of the quantities that had been there. There was not a snipe, and nothing was to be done but to make a retrograde movement and return home from whence we came. Accordingly, having stowed away our guns and ammunition, and having a nice little breeze dead aft, we hoisted a little sail which we each carried, and proceeded on our way much disgusted with the fool’s errand we had been on. We had got on very comfortably till within about half a mile of Constance Bridge, when the wind

dropped, and having tied our little sails round the masts, we took to our sculls. My friend proposed that I should get into his boat, and that the two servants should pull home in the other. Accordingly, we, what is called "went in company" till we got to the bridge. When close to the said bridge, the two servants, as is usually, or I may say always, the custom, got hold of some ropes that were stretched along a wall for the purpose of pulling boats up under one of the arches into the lake above, or to where the water was slack, for under the bridge the water ran like a mill-race, and was, at the time I am speaking of, so high, and the stream so strong, that the small steamer that usually ran between Constance and Schaffhausen had ceased to ply, from the fact that there was not room overhead, and that from the swiftness of the stream she would not answer her helm.

"Now then," said my friend, who was as strong as a horse, and a first-rate hand at sculling, "I'll pull through the middle arch." I tried to persuade him that such a performance, in such a state as the stream was from the melted snow that was coming through the lake, which was thirty or forty miles long, was out of the question. I tried to persuade him that it

was impossible, that he was a fool, and everything I could think of; but no, he was sure he could do it easily, he had pulled up stronger streams before, and *coûte qui coûte* he would have a shy at it. Accordingly, at it he went; he got under the arch, but it was too much for him, and the punt fell back down stream; he tried it again, with the same result. "Now, you see you cannot manage it," I said. "You had better pull up by the ropes as the men did." "No, by Jove," said he, "I won't be beaten; I know I can do it; I'll have another try;" and putting on all the steam he could muster, at it he went again, for the third time. He had got nearly through, when the stream caught the nose of the punt and turned it nearly round against one of the piers, or props, that supported the bridge. "Let her go down, let her go down!" said I; but no, instead of doing this, he put his oar against the pier, and tried to push her off. In a moment the stream took her, she filled, and fairly capsized; and turning the mast upside down, and us, and an old blue-and-white-ticked pointer that he had taken in the boat with us, into the water. I instantly caught hold of the pile aforesaid, but I was instantly swept away, like a kitten that had been thrown into

a mill race to be drowned. My companion went down one arch, and I went down the other; and luckily, as we were being carried along by the torrent, for it might fairly bear that name, up came the bottom of the boat, within a yard or two of us. I stuck my nails into the bottom of it, and hung on, whilst he and his old pointer got on to it. And thus we, like the pig in *The Devil's Walk*, down the river did glide with vast celerity. I had my fishing or wading boots on, and a thick mackintosh, and between the buttons in the front one of the fixed iron tholl pins had got fast, so that, till I let myself down in the water, and managed to get it loose, I was a fixture to the boat. Having done this, and hanging on to the punt with my finger nails, we were carried along fairly comfortably by the stream for quite a quarter of a mile, till we got into slacker water where the river was pretty broad. My servant, and my friend's *jäger*, who had got almost into the lake, had seen the sail that was round the mast disappear all of a sudden; and as I had hailed them as soon as I could, for they said they fancied they heard some one holloa, they came to the rescue. And glad enough I was to see the boat coming, for I had had for some time my pockets pretty full of

water, and what with boots and mackintosh, and so forth, I was beginning to feel somewhat tired and weighed down by so many wet incumbrances. Having reached us they tried to help me into their boat, but I was so heavy that they could not manage it in the ordinary way, and so, getting hold of one of my legs, which I managed to turn up for them to get hold of, they pulled me head over heels into the punt as if I had been a sack of beans. By the time this rescue was achieved it was growing quite dark, rain was coming down pretty heavily, and it was thundering and lightening in first-rate style ; but we were safely out of the water, which was the main point. It would have been an amusing sight to any one who could have seen us as we floated down the river. My companion had managed to get on to the end of the punt, and the old pointer had got on to the middle of it, whilst I was to be seen, hanging like grim death on to the other end, which, from my friend being a pretty heavy man, was tilted out of the water. There is no doubt but that we cut a most ridiculous and miserable figure ; and had it been daylight, we might have been fair subjects for a little ridicule ; as it was, had we both been drowned, and the old pointer with us,

there would have been no witnesses to the fact but our two servants. But, I hear it said, how was it that you were not drowned? To this I answer: "We were both brought up at Eton, and having there learnt to swim like ducks and dive like otters, we did not lose our heads, or open our mouths and splutter about and get them filled with water, but took matters coolly, and thus managed to keep our heads above water." Luckily we had put our guns and ammunition, and everything that was heavy and cumbrous, into the other boat, before my rash companion made the insane attempt that so nearly did for us. Had there been three of us, or one that could not swim, there is little doubt but that some one would have been drowned. It would have been difficult to drown my companion, for he was a very strong man, and one of the best possible swimmers; but I, from having had a broken leg, and being lumbered up with my boots and mackintosh and such like, was comparatively helpless. Having, however, in my earlier days been a good swimmer, gave me confidence, and I have every reason to say "*Florcat Etona*;" and I think, good reader, you will agree with me, that it was nothing less than "touch and go" under Constance Bridge.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SHOOTING DUCKS ON LAKE MAGGIORE.

AFTER having done my fishing at Constance and the falls of the Rhine, my old friend Guildford Onslow and I made a plan to go into Italy, and accordingly, having laid our heads together as to how we should get our two boats, which were, in fact, two gunning punts (made under our own directions at Constance), over the mountain passes to the Lakes Maggiore and Como, we chartered a man and his cart and horses, with an agreement to pay a certain sum when we found them safe at their destination ; which we finally did. Having heard that the said boats had arrived, the yellow coach, of which you may have read in *Down the Road*, pages 141 and 147, conveyed me and my family to the Lake of Como, and from thence to Milan, where I passed the winter.

In the spring I took a *casa di villeggiatura* at a



village called Laveno, and having spent some weeks there fishing, I found that the lake was, during the autumn and winter months, swarming with wild fowl. I had my Constance-made punt, which was a fairly good one for duck shooting, but I had no gun—at least, no punt gun, and a gunning-punt without a gun is as useless as a gun without a punt, and very much as useful for wildfowl shooting as a pump would be without a handle. What was I to do? There were lots of ducks then, and in winter there would be no end of them. A gunning-punt, lots of ducks, and no gun! The affair was too serious to be borne, so, after having passed some sleepless nights, I made up my mind, *coûte qui coûte*, to try and get one from England. This, to cut matters short, after much writing and scheming, I did, and I got a letter to say that a gunning-punt and gun had left Plymouth for Genoa by a sailing vessel, which, when it had arrived at Genoa, was forwarded to me to Belgirate, where I was then living, having left Laveno, which was on the Austrian side of the lake, and Belgirate on the Piedmontese side.

I had no end of trouble to get the Piedmontese authorities to allow me to put my gun in the punt. What could I want with such a piece of artillery?

The people at the Custom House did not know what to call it. They could not call it a gun, because a gun was fired from a man's shoulder, and Hercules himself could not have done this. It could not be called a *scioppo á cavaletto*, for this was an instrument of warfare, or a sort of wall-piece. At last they let me have it, under the title of *pistoni di caccia*, or a piston of the chase. All very vexing and very foolish, but so it was, and so long as I got them to let me have my gun and boat, I did not care by what name the said gun went. The Austrians were in power in Milan in those days, and as I knew the governor of Milan and many other Austrians, who were hated by almost all Italians, I conclude they thought I should attempt to besiege and take the town of Belgirate.

Having got my punt and gun together, and afloat on the lake, the next thing was where to get powder suitable for a gun of the size mine was, which carried three ounces of coarse-grained powder and fourteen to sixteen ounces of shot. I managed to get some Swiss powder smuggled in, but it was all too fine. At last, after various futile efforts, I had to content myself with the common blasting-powder of the country—of all beastly stuff the most beastly. It was

very coarse, which perhaps is a fault on the right side, but it was very weak, and fouled the gun so that it was all but impossible to mop the gun out after firing; and at times, from the glutinous nature of its components, the cleaning rod would stick quite fast, and it took, as the saying is, "three men and a boy" to get it out at all. There were no breechloaders in those days, so there was nothing for it but to put up with all sorts of inconveniences as regards loading and keeping the gun clean, which is a *sine quâ non* with a punt gun, unless you wish to have constant miss-fires.

Having engaged a man, a boatman of the said village of Belgirate by the name of Jep, to work my punt, which was a double-handed one, and having inducted him into a suit of white canvas, or duck, with a white lamb-skin cap, and being in the same dress myself, we soon got afloat, and looked, I flatter myself, about the right thing. After a little practice he learnt to scull the punt fairly well. This is not a very easy thing for a man to do, lying on his back in the stern of a punt, with his head merely raised enough to see over the stem of the punt, and see the ducks ahead of him. The ducks were in great numbers—not in hundreds, but, I may say, in thousands—and as you

saw them, from say half a mile off, on a calm day, they looked positively like a great black wall ; in fact, no one, unless he knew what they were, could have imagined that they could be birds of any kind. Upon nearing them, and getting ready, and going down in the punt to what is termed "go into them," difficulties increased at every yard you neared them. There were thousands of ducks, but double the number of eyes, and nothing seemed so easy as to get up to them, and have a shot into the brown, for they seemed to be sitting together as thick as hops, and to be all asleep, which was actually the case, with the lake as smooth as if it was made of glass, and a hot sun shining upon them. Indeed, at such a time they looked like a lot of pumpkins on the water, for as a rule they floated about with their heads under their wings, unconscious of any danger being at hand. On getting pretty close to them, you found that instead of being in a thick mass they were dotted all over the place, like sparrows round a cab-stand, and that you would have to pass endless sentries, if I may so call them, before you could get anywhere near the flock, or even where you could get a fair line of birds to shoot at. Many is the time that I have passed dozens of great fat ducks and mallards sitting singly,

or by twos and threes together, snoozing, with their heads under their wings. I have passed them so close that I could have put a landing-net over them, or have touched them with the ramrod of my cripple-stopper; and on gently turning my head, I have frequently seen many that I have passed within a few yards totally ignorant of my presence, and still quietly sleeping as if it was all right, when suddenly one of them would raise his head, and with a rush and a "quack, quack, quack," raise the whole flock which were still quite out of shot. However, at such a moment there were generally some that had got into a line as they rose, and at these I used to let drive, and often got five or six, knocking down more, who, of course, got away. For it is seldom one gets more than half what one knocks down, and three or four winged ducks on a large piece of water take some retrieving, they dive so deucedly to every point of the compass that cripple-stopper and cripple-net are often no match for them; and if you are not very sharp upon them—I mean going up to them the moment they fall, and lay about you right and left with your cripple-stopper or shoulder-gun—you are sure to lose any bird that has any life left in him, and even then you must be very quick, for no rabbit shooting requires such quick

shooting as stopping wounded or diving ducks. I dare say many who read this will say "Bosh!" All I can say is, if you have never done it, try it, and you will have your eyes opened to the fact, and will say with me, "For quick shooting commend me to a crippled duck, or what is still quicker, a crippled pochard or widgeon."

After having tried many times to get at the main flock I found it was out of the question, so I turned my attention to any small lots that I could find, and as there used to be some of these in sundry corners of the lake, I sometimes managed to do pretty well; and when I have found six or eight ducks sitting well together and asleep in the sun, I have on more than one occasion cut up the whole company. But this was not often the case; the powder was so abominably weak and bad that unless I could get to within about sixty yards I used often to find nothing but feathers where there ought to have been ducks, for when they are sitting on the water, and, as I have before stated, asleep, with their heads under their wings, they present, as it were, nothing but a heap of feathers, and it takes a deal to kill them. Sometimes one has been able to get them to set their heads up by giving a sharp tap on the bottom of the punt

with one's toe, but this is not always a certain proceeding, and acts, according to my fancy, better at night than in the daytime.

There have been many discussions as to the distance that a stanchion, or punt gun, will kill. To this my answer would be, that at birds on the water eighty yards is quite far enough ; on the wing, or if feeding on the shore and you can get a good line, you may kill them pretty satisfactorily up to a hundred, but after that distance the shot flies so thinly that there is not much certainty. Many people fancy that because you have a gun that carries three ounces of powder, and from twelve to sixteen ounces of shot, you may kill birds from the Land's End to Johnny Groat's house. This is a great mistake, and though birds may be killed by a chance shot at an almost incredible distance, if you can get to within sixty yards so much the better ; if you can't get nearer than seventy or eighty, pull, but at the same time remember that "close quarters" is the best recipe for filling the bag.

There is nothing more deceptive than distance over water, and what appears to be sixty yards is often a hundred. My old boatman Jep, though an honest and worthy man, was as obstinate as my grandmother's

sow, and always fancied birds were much nearer than they were in reality. "*Spara sur, padrone, spara*"—meaning, "Fire, sir master, fire"—he would whisper, and when I found he was growing sulky and desperate off she used to go, and very often the amount of feathers, instead of ducks, used to tell their own tale.

In a double-handed punt your man is often more master than man, and so much depends upon him that you are obliged at times to come into his ways. I remember on one occasion the aforesaid Jep being so angry at my not *sparaing* when he told me, that on landing on the beach under my house he put on his coat, and said he would never go out again unless I would shoot when he told me. He, however, repented him of his obstinate stupidity, and having cried "*peccavi*," we became the best of friends again, and he remained with me as long as I lived in that part of the world, working my punt, nursing the baby, and making himself generally useful.

The ducks that frequented Lago Maggiore were uncommonly fine birds, which might be accounted for by their flying every evening to the rice fields near Pavia, some forty or fifty miles off, and from which they returned about nine o'clock in the morning,



coming in strings or flocks of fifty or sixty together for fully half-an-hour. The flocks sometimes seemed as if they never would cease arriving. We were seldom without ducks for dinner, as you may suppose, and when there was an overplus of the article my boatman used to send them to market, getting about tenpence each for them. A couple of ducks that had been fed on rice, and a bottle of the red wine of the country, which had a good deal of body in it, made by no means a bad dinner.

I was for several weeks during the season in Milan, but I managed to kill and bring home six hundred and forty-eight ducks and mallards. No teal, or widgeon, or any other kind of duck ever appeared on the lake. I saw one wild-goose amongst the large flock of ducks one day, but he soon went off, and I never saw him again.

My gun and punt were the first that ever were seen on the lake, and had I only had some of Colonel Hawker's sea gunpowder, and a good man from England to work my punt, I believe I *should* have killed some ducks.

The heaviest shot I ever made was in returning home one evening, just as it was getting dusk, and the ducks were getting pretty thick together before

taking flight for the rice-grounds. I got almost aboard of them, and letting drive at them just as they were getting their wings open to fly I cut a lane right through them, and picked up twenty-eight, wounding of course half as many more, which it was useless to attempt to follow, as the nights in Italy get dark at once, and directly it begins to be dark the evening closes in like shutting up a book. Of course, as my punt used to be drawn up on the shore it soon became an object of admiration, and a priest, who was a very clever fellow, set his wits to work to copy it, which I found after I had left he had done very well.

I made up my mind to go from Milan to Rome, and try my luck in the Pontine Marshes. So I sold my gun and punt to a Count Castelbarco, who lived on the Austrian side of the lake, went back to Milan, packed the big yellow coach once more, and after some adventures and crossing sundry rivers, which was by no means a pleasant operation, as the bridges had in one or two places been demolished by heavy floods, we at last found ourselves at Rome.

## CHAPTER X.

### ROME—OSTIA.

HAVING arrived at Rome, at the "Eternal City," and after having been swindled for some days at an hotel, we found ourselves located in what was called a Palazzo, in a small street which went under the name of "Contrada di Maria di Fiori." The street was somewhat out of the way it is true, but it was a quiet street, there was no one but my own family in the suite of rooms I had taken, which were over some stables, and which, of course, were redolent of stables, and all things appertaining to horses. It was not exactly pleasant to feel that one was as it were almost living in the stables, but the smell from them was far preferable to the generality of odours which assailed one's olfactory organs in the palazzos in other streets—odours which the far-famed Rimmel or Atkinson would have no chance of succeeding in imitating. Added to these little *contretemps* the rooms,

which were really fairly large and airy for such a situation, from having a quantity of long straw laid down under the carpets to keep them from wearing out were amazingly infested by fleas. There were large fleas, and little fleas, and lesser fleas to bite them, and lesser fleas, and lesser fleas, and fleas *ad infinitum*. In fact, the flea of the "Eternal City" was fairly rampant in the Contrada di Maria di Fiori. But the town was full of visitors; there were but few suites of apartments that were not engaged; other people put up with all kinds of stinks, and fleas; I had come to Rome with my family, and when at Rome I must do as Rome does, so there was nothing for it but to make the best of matters.

I had not been long there before I had a great hankering after snipe, wild fowl, and so forth, and I soon made arrangements with a certain man, a wood merchant, by name Ciceroica, to hire a pony and small kind of gig to drive to places to shoot. Also, through the advice of my courier I made the acquaintance of two brothers, who were locksmiths, or some kind of engineers, who were devoted to *la caccia*, and who possessed an old Joe Manton gun that had been transmogrified by one of them from flint and steel to copper cap, and of which he was most immensely proud.

They knew every little swamp, and every bit of ground where a snipe was to be found, and therefore they were most useful acquaintances, and were really capital fellows. I cannot pretend to tell all the places we went to, and the snipe we killed and all the fun we had together, but one place in particular must be mentioned. It was what was called the sulphur springs, about six or seven miles from Rome. It was a most curious piece of flat, mossy, and rushy ground, covered with a spongy kind of substance, almost like soft pumice stone, and which there can be but little doubt had at some former period been cast up by some subterraneous heat or fire. The water standing in these places was about the temperature of new milk, and smelt strongly of sulphur, in fact, they were sulphur springs, and the scent of them was so strong that if the wind set towards you you could smell them quite a quarter of a mile off. After a heavy rain the whole place was a sulphurous swamp, and it was quite a matter of astonishment to me why the snipe should take such a fancy to such an ill-savoured place, for the odour was like the washing out of gun barrels. The marsh around was studded with thorn trees, from a foot to seven or eight feet high, and amongst these, the snipe, when disturbed

from the springs used to fly, there being little slops or puddles of water between almost every tree. I need not say that as soon as they got up there was no time to be lost, for they were out of sight in a moment. I remember that the first day I went to this ground there were quantities of snipe, and I killed nine couple. I went next day feeling sure that they would again all be there, but, alas! instead of snipe there were quantities of springes, or snares set, feathers all over the place, and evident marks that showed that the snarers had had a real good haul. Doubtless, having heard a good deal of shooting they knew what was up, and were springing all night long. For the Roman peasants are good hands at taking all sorts of game, as may be seen by the market-place.

I was not a little surprised at finding, when I emptied my pockets when I got home, that all my silver money, my silver pencil-case, and my silver hunting watch, were turned as black as if they had been laid by and not cleaned for fifty years, and my clothes and everything about me smelt of sulphur, just as a dog does when he has been dressed for the mange.

The peasants catch a vast quantity of woodcock also, during the time of their passage, in a very curious

way ; it is as follows : Many of the cows and beasts or oxen in the Campagna have large bells round their necks, made of tin or some such metal, which produce a dull sound like tum tum, tum tum, as they walk along. The peasants having found out where a flight of woodcocks have arrived, are soon after them, and having strapped one of these bells round their waists, and a lantern above it, with a sort of landing-net in their hands, they walk quietly through the underwood, which is generally of cork trees or ilex. As they walk along, tum tum, tum tum, goes the bell, the light dazzles the birds, and they crouch down, when over them goes the landing-net in a twinkling, and they are put into a bag which they carry fastened round them.

Having heard one day that a lot of woodcocks had arrived, I and two or three friends sallied forth to a cork wood about six miles from Rome to welcome them. We beat the wood for a long time, and only killed two or three, and hardly found any.

On our return to a small road-side sort of inn, where we had left our conveyance, a man came up and said, "Ah ! gentlemen, you are too late, you should have been here yesterday ; *I paysani colli lanterni e campanelli.*" The peasants with their

lanterns and bells were here last night, and they took away a sackful. There were sundry stories of wild boars being in some of the woods, and we made sundry excursions to shoot them, but I never saw one during the whole of my stay at Rome. I once saw the marks of one, and I sat for nearly half a day on a sort of stile by the wood side waiting for him, and I believe I was in my heart glad that he did not put in an appearance. There were generally one or two to be seen in the market, but where they came from I could never quite make out. They were very good to eat if properly dressed and served up with *agro dolci* and *pinioli* sauce ; indeed all pork about Rome was good, as the greater part of them were not home fed, but lived in the woods and in the Campagna, and fed principally upon wild chestnuts and the acorns from the ilex or holm oak. The flesh was brown, as in killing them their throats were not cut to make black-puddings of as in England. As I am on the subject of pigs and pork, I shall make a slight digression, and introduce you to a day's pig-killing at Rome.

Having heard that the great pig-killing day of the season was about to take place, I and a friend made up our minds to what the French would call *assister*,



or be present. Accordingly we adjourned to the place of slaughter, which was a sort of square, full of wooden pens, almost like what the pens in Smithfield used to be, but higher, say about five feet high, and capable of containing from thirty to forty pigs. Out of these larger pens was a smaller pen capable of holding a dozen or so.

The right number of pigs having been driven into the smaller pen, a man, armed with a small kind of skewer, or stiletto, about six or seven inches long, got into the pen, went down on his knees, seized a pig by the fore-leg, turned him over on his side in a most dexterous manner, and ran the stiletto up to the hilt, which was merely a kind of ring made by a turn in the iron; having given the weapon a turn or two to be sure he had hit him in the right place, he caught hold of another, and so on till he had killed all in the pen, which he did in an incredibly short space of time. Whilst the dead pigs were being dragged out he went into another slaughter shop, and by the time he had despatched his victims there his first pen was full again, and going down on his knees again, he performed the same kindly office that he had done before, and so went on till he and various others engaged in the same occupation had

slaughtered all the pigs. To give you any sort or kind of idea of the squealing and noise that went on during this operation is quite past my art ; I can only compare it to a hundred pipers let loose at a Highland gathering and all playing different airs at the same time. I cannot say that I saw all the pigs killed, but I saw a great many, and, curious to say, there was not as much blood spilt from the whole number as there would have been from the shaving of one English pig at Christmas. All these Roman pigs, from being stuck with a stiletto in the heart, bled inwardly. The number killed on that day was three thousand seven hundred, and it is a curious fact that every pig was jet black ; and those who had bought them, or to whom they belonged, were the whole day carrying them away in carts, when they would be salted, and made into hams, bacon, and Roman sausages.

There was close to this pig-killing establishment the slaughter-house for cattle, which was, I thought, perfect in its way, and so different from the untidy and brutal ways used in this country that I shall give a short description of it. The animals to be killed had simply their heads tied up to a beam ; a man, with a sort of mallet made of chestnut-wood,

which is a very tough wood, and rounded at both ends, like the ends of a pestle used in a pestle and mortar in a kitchen, with a pretty long and rather elastic handle, gave them a blow on the forehead which invariably knocked them down; he then, with the block and tackle used for tying their heads up to a proper height for striking them, let their heads down over a large sort of gutter or open drain with running water in it, and over this he cut their throats. This was all very neat and clever and expeditious, and so unlike the barbarous poleaxe used by our butchers, that I was quite struck with it.

Having Ciceroica's pony and *caratina* at my command, I used often to go down to Ostia to shoot. It was a long way off and the road was execrably bad; I think it was from twelve to fourteen miles, and to go in the daytime was almost out of the question, for then you could see the road and the badness of it, and the perils you had to encounter; at night-time you could not see your danger, and it was only a wonder how, in the little conveyance with the little black pony, one ever managed to get down there at all. My great object was to be at a certain bridge, between two vast swamps full of tall reeds, at daybreak, as the ducks and teal, which frequented

some marshes near, used to pass the said bridge in untold quantities at morning flight time. I and my servant used generally to leave the Contrada di Maria di Fiori about two in the morning. The scoundrels we used to see lurking about the streets and suburbs of Rome were enough to alarm one, but we were never molested ; and I have often wondered why we were never stopped, robbed, murdered, and eaten, for to look at them they seemed capable of anything.

Having done this journey there and back again more than once, I found it was too much of a good thing, and having been introduced to a Count Pulverosi, who was a capital fellow and very fond of Englishmen, and whom we called Dusty Bob, he, having a sort of farm and a sort of barn on the ground, most kindly allowed me to make use of it, and there I used to sleep and put my pony up, and having taken some provisions, and having lit a large fire of faggots which his tenant, who looked like a brigand or some such scoundrel, brought me, in the corner of the large building, we managed to rough it pretty well ; it was not very luxurious, I own, but it was better than having to travel back on the road I have named, and which was quite impassable for anything but a machine on two wheels. A friend of mine

once attempted to drive down with me in his mail phaeton, but he was obliged to give it up when he had got about half-way, when he had to turn out of the road on to a kind of large field, and we had to go back to Rome. I remember that, from the Tiber having overflowed, the fields, or whatever they were termed, were all over mud from the said river, and we saw lots of snipe running on the top of the mud ; nothing would suit him but he must get out his gun and have a shot if possible. On coming back, finding the mud too sticky for travelling, he dropped his powder-horn, and on going back to where he thought he had lost it he slipped up into a sitting position, and stuck so fast that he could not get out again without assistance, leaving a very fine impression of the corduroy breeches that he had on, and which may, for anything I know, be there to this day, for the mud of the river Tiber is of a most tenacious order, and what the artists use for modelling with. I used seldom to stay more than a couple or three nights at the Pulverosi barn. There was not much to be done in the daytime ; the flight-shooting in the morning was the sport that pleased me best. There were plenty of snipes about, but from the nature of the ground they were bad to get at. The ground

was not good for a sound man to travel over, but for a man with a stiff hip-joint, as I had, it was simply impossible.

The bridge at Ostia, over which the road ran straight between two vast beds of tall reeds, such as are used in building houses, which were of some hundreds of acres, was the favourite place for the ducks and teal to pass from their feeding ground to the great reed beds which I have named. The quantity that used to pass in the morning just at daylight was something hardly to be credited. They came in flocks of two or three hundred together, and most commonly, of course, out of distance, for they had plenty of room without flying near me. However, when they did come near enough, I dropped the contents of my eight gauge William Moore into them, often cutting a hole through them as if a hog-head had been fired through them. Unless they fell on the road it was impossible to get them out of the vast reed beds, which were from eight to ten feet high, standing in a yard or more of water, and growing as thickly together as possible. I had a very good retriever but he soon got tired in working amongst such thick and wet cover. Many is the time that I have knocked down six or eight at a shot,

and not more than one or two have fallen on the road, and though Sailor used to get me some, I never could make a very satisfactory bag considering the number I had put *hors de combat*.

The most satisfactory bag I made there was of wild geese. Having heard of some being on a piece of ground not very far away, upon a kind of plain, where a good many bullocks were turned out to graze, I repaired there by daylight one cold morning; there was a good deal of snow on the distant hills, and every wild goose in the country seemed to have met together to meet me; they were there in hundreds, but quite unapproachable. They flew about from place to place, keeping me at a most respectful distance. At last I thought of a plan. Sending my servant to a distance and where they could see him very plainly, I lay down on my back under a fence, which is called there *stagionati*, and is made of strong chestnut wood to shut off the cattle. They did not seem to take very great notice of me in this kind of ambush, and several flew over me, when I raised myself up and gave it them under their feathers, my charge being two ounces of No. 1 shot, and six drachms of powder behind it. I killed five in this way. They were the common grey lag, *Anas anser*, and were very good

eating. I went to the same place on another occasion, but did not see a goose, and I can only account for my having seen them when I did, by the hills in the distance being so covered with snow. I heard from a gentleman some time after that the peasants had adopted my plan of lying under the railings, and that they often killed some geese in the Campagna in this manner.



## CHAPTER XI.

### PONTINE MARSHES.

HAVING made up a party to go and shoot in the Pontine Marshes, the yellow coach was put into requisition, and I and five more in due course arrived at *Torri tres Ponti*, which was but a sorry kind of road-side inn, and, of course, standing in a marsh, or at least a very humid position. We had taken plenty of things to eat and drink, and cigars and tobacco to any amount, for we had heard all kinds of stories about malaria, Roman fever, and such-like maladies, and smoking a good deal, and brandy-and-water, and such innocent stimulants, are said to be great, if not pleasant, antidotes. We took powder and shot enough to blow a town up with, and were bent upon doing great things in the snipe and wildfowl line.

I shall never forget our first expedition against

the birds and beasts. There had been a great deal of rain, and the greater part of what generally was a vast marsh was a vast sea, and, like Noah's dove, we were almost puzzled to find a place to set our feet; so we hired a bullock waggon and a peasant to conduct us to ground that was not under water. We had a longish way to go, and the journey was something abominable: off the track, then on the track, then into a deepish kind of pond, then we got on to the track again, for it was no kind of road, and the bullocks and the waggon got almost swamped at times, and we should have been quite stuck fast if our waggoner had not been a good hand at swearing at and belabouring his oxen.

Having arrived at a wood of the evergreen oak, or ilex, we descended from our waggon. We found three or four woodcocks, and no end of pigs, who had been driven there when the marshes were drier to feed upon the acorns. Some of them seemed inclined to be nasty, and I dare say were pretty short of grub, as they had been there for some time on account of the said wood being surrounded with water from the heavy rains. Thus, after a most unsatisfactory day's sport, for we killed only two or three woodcocks, we retraced our steps, and were

not sorry to find ourselves back at the *Ostleria*, where my courier, who was a first-rate fellow, had got us a blazing fire and a good dinner.

There was no end of fowl of all kinds, snipe, ducks, and a good many geese, but the cunning devils knew what they were about, and sat about on every bit of ground that showed itself above the water; in fact there was plenty of the marshes above water, but they were islands, and not to be got to in anything but a boat.

Oh! how I longed for a gunning punt. I saw one or two *cacciatori*, peasants who were fond of shooting, and who killed ducks, &c., to send to the Roman market, who seemed well up to the kind of thing, and managed to get some shots with a stalking horse, upon which they rode through the water to where the ducks were, and then got off and stalked them by creeping alongside the horse, who seemed well trained for the purpose. They had a largish gun attached to a ring on the front of the saddle, or large pad, from which they fired over the horse's back. The gun was a roughish affair, about a four bore single gun, with a barrel of about six feet long. I own that I should have been afraid to let off such an article, but they never thought of this, and they killed a great many

ducks, I am told, at times. I say at times, because, as an old gunner, I can tell you that at times, if ducks are not canny they will hardly allow you to look at them, but will get up and fly, and alight again, and fly again, from no apparent cause that I could ever find out, except that they are not canny ; perhaps it has something to do with the weather, but of this, never having been a duck, I cannot speak with any certainty, and only state it as a fact, in which, I feel sure any old brother gunner will bear me out.

I was surprised one day to see one of these Pontine Marsh shooters, who had killed some ducks, carefully extracting their entrails, and on asking him the reason, he said that they always fried them for their own eating, and that they were the best part, and that they sent their bodies to the market. It may be so, but I never tried it, and what's more, I don't seem to see it.

Two of our party got a fair bag of snipe one day under the guidance of a *cacciatore*, who was famous in those days, named Scappalati. They brought home nineteen couple, but did it under great difficulties, from the state that the ground was in. There must have been very good flight-shooting at times, but the state of the country from the waters being

so much out, had turned everything upside down, and the ducks didn't seem to have any particular feeding ground, but were dotted all over the place. I went out one night near the house where we were stopping, but though I heard plenty flying over, I never got a bird.

I remember that a great rough, brigand-looking fellow, who was waiting also for a flight, came up to me and begged me to give him some *polvere Inglese*. I had some with me, but as I thought Roman powder, which was horrible stuff, would do as well for him, I made a great favour of it, and gave him a few charges, telling him that English powder was very hard to get, and that he must be very careful of it.

In talking to him I asked him if the people in the *Maremma*, or marshes, did not suffer a good deal from malaria or Roman fever. "Oh, yes," he said, "some did." "Did you ever have it yourself?" I asked. "*Oh, si, signore,*" he said, "*si, sovente, sovente; ma la malaria d'una ventre voto.*" (Oh, yes, sir, he said, often, often; but the malaria of an empty belly.)

As there was not much shooting to be done some of the party said, "Let us go back to Rome." I was getting tired of the kind of life myself; they played

at whist, and smoked till very late at night. Though I could smoke with the best of them, I hated cards, and though I could drink a certain amount of punch, which I used to brew for them in a washhand basin, ladling it out with a teacup, I could not keep pace with some of them, and I got tired of perpetually squeezing lemons and sitting up till two or three o'clock in the morning. I therefore agreed with them that it was of no use staying, and said, "Let us go back to Rome."

Accordingly, the yellow coach was again ordered out, and we beat a retreat to the "Eternal City." I made several excursions with my friends, the locksmiths, but except on the first day that I went to the sulphur springs I never made any good bags, or saw so many snipe as I did then.

On returning from my sniping one afternoon, I was accosted with "Have you heard what has happened?—poor Bertie Mathew has been killed with the hounds!" The fact was simply this: he was riding home from hunting in the Campagna with a lady and other friends. He was inclined to lark over the wooden fences which are called *staggionati*, and are made of split chestnut, which is a very tough wood. The lady begged him not to, upon which he

laughed and turned his horse, saying, "You go round, and I'll break my neck over this." He rode at the rails; his horse, which seemed inclined to refuse, hit the top rail, over they came, and he was picked up stone dead with his neck broken. It is somewhat curious that he should have died from actually breaking his neck, for only a few days before on my alluding to an accident he had riding, in which it was thought he had broken his neck, he said, "Oh! I am safe enough, I have broken my neck once, and I'm never likely to do it again." He was a very old friend of mine, and we had been at Eton together. He was a harum-scarum kind of fellow, and we used to call him Mad Bertie. He was most popular at Rome, where he lived a great deal, and his death caused quite a gloom there.

Amongst other diversions there was some hunting. There were plenty of foxes, but seldom much sport, owing to the numerous places in which they could go to ground. There were old caves, old tombs, and old ruins everywhere, and as digging them out was impossible, as soon as one was in an earth of any kind, all that was necessary was to go and draw for another.

A friend of mine, Captain Henry Turner, had a coach and a team of old hunters of the old stamp, and

we often used to go to the meet, and take a party of ladies, and so forth. He used generally to get a horse of some kind to ride on those occasions, and let me drive his coach back to Rome ; and though the said team were, as a rule, a steady and tractable lot, after they had seen the hounds their monkey would get up, and they could pull like distraction. I have named his coach and the team because I think they really deserve some notice, as well as the owner. Captain Henry Turner drove these horses, with a heavy load of luggage and his family, from London to Dover, crossed to Calais, and then across country to Schaffhausen ; from thence over one of the mountain passes into Italy and Rome. From Rome he drove to Naples and back, without accident of any kind, and without a horse being sick or sorry. This was a very long journey, and speaks well for master, horses, and coachman, which latter appendage was the only drawback, inasmuch as, like the generality of coachmen, he could not keep his nose out of a pot of drink. He was a good coachman, a clever fellow, and would have been a comfort to any master but for that one fatal failing.

Soon after the expedition to the Pontine Marshes, the yellow coach was bound to Genoa, and then to England—see *Down the Road*, page 143.



## CHAPTER XII.

### A SCRATCH TEAM AT ROME.

WHILST at Rome, various expeditions with Captain Turner's coach were made, and the neat turn-out, with the old hunters, was thought a great deal of, and created quite a *furore*. I remember one day that a party was made for a drive, and the blue coach was kindly lent for the purpose. Horses were procured from one person, and then from another, and a certain noble lord, who was a capital whip, was engaged to drive them. The coach was drawn up at the door of the hotel in the Via Babuina, surrounded by an eager and admiring crowd. The passengers, amongst whom were some ladies, were all seated, and the horses put to. The coachman mounted his rostrum, and all was, as far as one could see, all right, but two of his team refused to start. One of the wheelers began to jib, and the offside leader, which was a well-bred, good-

looking chestnut mare, would not have it at any price, and ran back upon the pole, and set to to mill in grand style. This happened two or three times, and it seemed rather uncertain whether the noble coachman, who stuck to his work well, would get his coach off at all. He did, however, achieve this at last, and away they went down the Via Babuina, as they term it, "hells bells." I thought that the coach must have gone over, for the motion was somewhat oscillating, but they managed to get through the Porta del Popolo, and I was happy to find that they returned in the evening alive and well. Had the coachman not known his business, and had he not managed his horses as he did, no doubt he would have come to grief. It was, however, a somewhat touch-and-go affair, and would not give any one a very pleasant notion of what is called "a scratch team."

What is the meaning of a scratch team? What is it composed of? and how shall I define it? I have consulted all the authorities likely to be able to give me any information: the Latin and Greek dictionaries, *Gradus ad Parnassum*, Bradshaw, and even Mogg on Roads, and I can find nothing really reliable, and therefore I must have recourse to my own experience, such as it is. A scratch team

consists of four horses obtained as best you can, and often at a short notice, from your friends, or a job-master, or some other source; in fact, your coach will be, like many other popular institutions, supported entirely by voluntary contributions—one contribution of a horse from one friend, one, perhaps, of your own, one from the job-master, and the other from some other benefactor; in fact, you will have a kind of *omnium-gatherum* affair. It is not often, as a rule, that horses give much trouble, and though there is often a good deal of “Wo, my man!” “Wo, old fellow!” “Steady, my dear!” “Poor little woman!” with a deal of patting on the neck by the grooms or horsekeepers, who are doing all they can to make your horses fancy that they ought to do something wrong, and something that they never dreamt of, a good punch in the ribs, and a “come up, you brute,” or some such endearing epithet, is better than all the tender, coaxing words that are being so freely lavished upon them. I don’t mean that they ought to be rough with the horses, but it’s no use making them believe that something’s up, or that they must of necessity be going to behave ill.

Having got your team put to your coach, you, perhaps, feel proud of your performance thus far

and mount on to your rostrum with perfect confidence in your team and your coachman. Perhaps, and it often is so, your scratch team starts well, and goes off as if they had all been in your coach before, for horses are by nature beasts of burthen, made to draw, and are seldom otherwise than good fellows at heart. But, when they are not good fellows at heart, when they are what is called a three-cornered lot, when your off-leader wants to pull the whole coach himself, and does his best to pull you off the box, and your near-side mare won't go well up to her collar, but hangs back with the bars rattling against her hocks, and swishes her tail, puts back her ears, and seems to have written on her back, "I can kick a town down," when, added to this, you find that your near-wheeler jibs, and that your off-wheeler won't hold an ounce, then look out for squalls, and don't tell me that a scratch team is a pleasant thing to drive. You may fancy so, but it is not the real state of your feelings, or that of your passengers. Should you on such an occasion not be very handy both with your fiddle-strings and your fiddle-stick, and quite up to all emergencies, it will greatly add to your *bien-être* if you have a nervous petticoat on the box with you, as she

will probably shriek aloud in her agony of mind, and make frantic grabs at your reins and whip, and be a real comfort to you at the most critical moment.

It is now some years since that I left my own diggings to go to Northampton Races, and join a party living a short distance from Market Harborough. Arrangements were made that I should send my own team on, half way, to a place called Lamport, which may be well known to many who will read this as being a favourite meet in the Pytchley country; my kind friend provided me with a scratch team to do the first half of the distance, and I was to drive my own team on to the course. My scratch team consisted of two very clever roan cobs as leaders, and two covert hacks at wheel, the near-wheeler a good sort of dark brown mare, and the off-wheeler a nice active little brown bay mare, a charming lady's mare, but totally unfit to be at wheel in a heavy coach. We made a good start from the house and got safely down a short slope, I cannot call it a hill, which was very pleasantly coated with new shingly gravel. I soon found that neither of my wheelers were used to going down hill without the patent drag, and that my off-wheeler would not hold an ounce. This was

a pleasant sort of team to start with, and as there were sundry hills and shoots in the seven miles before I should come to my change, I almost wondered how we should get there. However, it was daylight, and with going a little cannily, and with the help of my now almost obsolete skid, we did get there without coming to grief. We change at Lamport, and I drive my own team on to the Northampton race-course, when everything goes right, and I am ordered by the ladies to be ready as soon as the last race but one is over.

I am ready to the moment, and put myself and coach in evidence, but I have ladies amongst my passengers, and, gentle reader, I feel sure that you have guessed ere this that no power or persuasive eloquence of mine can get them near the coach—they must see the last race. I send to them, and try to impress upon them that it will be pitch dark before we can get home. Nevertheless, they stick to their seats in the grand stand as if they were stuck down with Burgundy pitch or diachylon plaster; budge they won't, and budge they don't till the last race is over.

At last, having got my load, we make a start, and by putting on a little extra steam arrive at our change.

It's getting a little dusky like, and I propose to light the lamps before we start. I am, however, overruled, and am persuaded that there will be plenty of time to get to Market Harborough before this will be necessary, as the night will not be very dark. My coachman, whom I had left at Lamport to look after my own horses when I arrived from the course, informed me, in a very lushy tone of voice, that the little mare was so lame that she could not by any means get home, and that I must drive one of my own wheelers instead. This I did, and lucky it was that I had him to fall back upon, for I am persuaded that had the little mare been fit to go I should, from the darkness of the night and her not holding an ounce, never have got home at all. The road was also a strange one to me, and had I not had my friend sitting on the box with me, and telling me when I was coming to a hill, I firmly believe we should have come to grief, and, as the French postilion said, it would have been a case of "*Roulez, roulez, ma diligence, et nous voilà sur le bon chemin.*" We had tried to light the lamps on the road, as the sky had got overcast and it was darker than we expected, but no power could get them to burn. My drunken scoundrel of a coachman had never

trimmed them for months, and the oil, from being gummed and as thick as treacle, obstinately refused to burn.

In spite of all these *contrctemps*, and by going gingerly, we arrived at Market Harborough, where we stopped at a grocer's shop and trimmed our lamps. Things seemed to be going better until we got to the toll-bar outside the town, when out went the devilish things again. We tried to relight them at the toll-bar, but light they would not, and light they did not, and we had to go on the best we could without them. The night had grown as dark as a nigger-boy. The road was a very dark one, being made of some bluish kind of stone; the grass or turf on the side of the road could not be distinguished from the colour of the road, and in this pleasant mode of travelling we groped our way for more than two miles to my friend's house. It was so dark that I don't think I could swear that I ever saw my leaders, which were blue roans, and almost the colour of the road. For the whole distance it was as dark as being inside a railway tunnel, and except as to pace not half so safe, for in a tunnel you cannot well get off the road; in our case it was a wonder that we were ever on it. However, more by luck than judgment, we got to our



journey's end, and I was glad enough to find myself once more under a hospitable roof, instead of in a ditch, with a broken leg and broken bones, and perhaps with a broken neck.

This was not altogether a pleasant outing. I shall always consider it an unpleasant one, and a somewhat dangerous one—thanks to the inebriated movements of my coachman, and the lamps striking work, owing to this son of Belial's liquoring-up propensities. Matters might have been a great deal worse, and I will conclude this subject with a few words about the said coachman, who, when not in liquor, was as decent and smart a fellow, and as good a servant, as could be.

I took him at the recommendation of a friend, to whom he had sworn eternal abstinence from getting past his guard. He was, or was supposed to be, a reclaimed drunkard, an animal of which I do not believe the existence; and in every instance that I have tried to tame the said animal—and I have done it on more than one occasion—the failure has been signal and most complete. When away from home he could not help breaking loose, and breaking the pledge he had given. He would always kick over the traces and get drunk. The devil and he used,

I do verily believe, to wrestle together a bit, but the devil always had the best of it.

He was a clever fellow when all right—I may say the smartest and best coachman I ever had—but he had in spite of all this a certain look about him which said, *purpureo bibit ore nectar*. He had a swiggy-looking mouth, and swiggy-looking lips, which betokened a dealer in spirituous liquors. Unless very lumpy he carried his liquor well. As a friend of mine once said to a servant he was thinking of engaging, “I suppose you don’t get drunk?” “No, sir.” “Are you at all fond of drink?” “Well, sir, I don’t think I’m particular fond of drink, but I can drink a glass of hale at times.” “Oh! I don’t want to know whether you can drink a glass of ‘hale’ or not, but do you drink? Of course you do, you all drink, but, damme, can you carry your drink?”

Now, I will do my coachman justice in saying, I heard after he had left me, that no glass of gin and water could be too stiff for him, and that no pewter pot could be too deep.

After what I have said, I think it will be evident to those who aspire to driving to races and such entertainments for pleasure, that they ought to take care that they have daylight with them, their lamps

properly trimmed in case of emergency, a sober coachman if they can manage it, horses that have been together before, and that they know ; ladies who are punctual and amenable to the coachman's call ; and, above all things, not a scratch team.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BERNACLE SHOOTING ON WHYRILL MARSH.

THE bernacle goose (*Anas eruthropus*, Lin.)—not the Brent goose, which many people, who know no better, call the bernacle, or Wexford bernacle—frequents a certain marsh at the mouth of the river Dee in Cheshire, called Whyrill Marsh, which is of considerable size, being something like ten miles long and three or four miles broad. The river Dee runs through a large plain of sand, which at low water is dry for a long distance on each side. On the Cheshire side of the river there is a large plain, if I may so term it, which is covered with a short kind of grass, of which the said geese are very fond. Through this grassy plain there are a great many ditches, or what are there termed gutters, which, after meandering about a good deal, eventually find their way into the bed of the river. Unless the tides

are pretty high, this tract of land with short grass on it is not always entirely covered, but parts of it remain above water, and on this the geese delight to feed. They seldom feed much in the daytime, but sit out in the middle of the marsh for hours together, quite motionless, till night, when they separate into small flocks, and fly about to the different uncovered spots to feed. Within about a mile of the shore I had some relations living, who were fond of bernacle shooting, and who were up to all the dodges necessary for waylaying these birds, who were too crafty to be killed in the daytime.

As a rule, these geese used to arrive in October, and the 7th was the day on which they were looked for, and it was very seldom I did not get a letter, dated October 7th, to say "the bernacles have arrived." They used to come in one or two small flocks, stay a few days, and then disappear for a time. They then returned in great numbers, and it was computed that there were a thousand pounds worth of bernacles when they had returned with those friends that they had, no doubt, gone to fetch—from whence I could never quite make out. But there they used to sit, never within half a mile of the shore, in a huge blue-looking mass that covered acres of

ground. The friend's house that I used to stay at was nearly a mile from the edge of the marsh, and many is the time that, whilst sitting at breakfast, we have heard the roar of their wings as they rose up together ; for they would frequently do this from no apparent cause, and would fly in a string fully a mile long to some other and more distant part of the marsh. There they would again sit motionless till night time.

This wild goose chase, or shooting, depended much on the state of the tides, and as it used to take place at night, a good deal of precaution was necessary, because, from the land being intersected with ditches, or gutters, of from six to eight or ten feet wide, and from four to six feet deep, all of which ran into what we used to call the big gutter, which was double or treble the size, there was every possibility of one's being cut off from the shore, if one was not on the shore side of the said gutters by a certain time. For there was no shelter, no trees to climb into, nor no nothing to prevent one's being surrounded by the tide and drowned.

We used generally to go out in a party of four or five, and the eldest of my cousins used to take the command, or management, or what in these days

would be termed, "be the captain." He was a capital sportsman in every way—a first-rate shot, a first-rate fisherman, very good on a horse, a first-class coachman, and the least jealous man that ever came under my notice—a rare quality at any time, but in these days of breechloaders a qualification seldom met with.

Our plan of proceeding on a bernacle-shooting night was this: Having dined, we put off our go-to-meeting clothes, and put on our roughest and warmest shooting-coats, with jerseys under, long water-boots, and a waterproof coat of some kind, for it was cold work, and the nights most suited to the sport were those that were the most windy, and I may say the most beastly—the worse the night the more sport might be expected, as on such occasions the geese generally flew lower than on a still and fine night.

When arrived at the marsh we all compared our watches, and, with our leader's admonition to be sure and be on the inside of the big gutter by such a time, we departed to our posts. One went a mile up the marsh and another a mile down the marsh, choosing any ground they thought the best. We generally had a pretty large double gun, which

would carry from an ounce and a half to two ounces of No. 3 shot. Having chosen our different posts, which were generally in one of the gutters, and having made things as snug as circumstances would admit of, with our backs to the wind, a pipe of shag tobacco—there were no fancy or gaudy mixtures in those days—was generally the next move, and a mighty consolation it was. Thus we waited patiently till it pleased the geese to be on the move. I have sat thus for hours without hearing a sound, and though we knew that there were many hundreds on the marsh, all would remain as still as death, till perhaps a spark would be seen in the distance, which proclaimed that some one had got a shot, and soon after geese would be heard. They seldom came in any great number, but in little lots of eight or ten, and when once they began to feed they used to separate from the main flock and fly pretty much all over the marsh, and when once settled and feeding you might have fancied that there was not a goose of any kind in the country. The distance that you could hear them coming on a really still evening was almost incredible, and it was most exciting, after having sat half the night in a wet ditch, smoking till your tongue was as hot as tinder and as dry as



a nutmeg-grater, to hear the welcome “clang, clang, clang, clang, clai, clai,” coming towards you. Out goes your pipe, or, which was oftener the case, in it goes into your pocket, all alight. You cock your gun and strain your eyes, which are watering with the piercing cold wind, coming from the sea, till you can see nothing, even if the birds come near you, which they very often do not. But I must say it is most exciting—the very sound of wild geese is real music.

We seldom went out without getting some geese, generally three or four; but the size of the place was so immense that it was quite a chance whether they came within shot or not. For the first ten days that I shot there I only got two geese, but on one occasion after that I had a real good night of it. We went out at five o'clock one evening and did not come in till nearly eight next morning, in time to get ready for breakfast at nine. We were five guns, and we laid twenty-four geese upon the servants' hall table, out of which number I had killed eleven. I got thirteen shots and knocked down twelve, one of which beat me. I knocked him down just as the tide was coming into one of the gutters, and I did not dare to follow him.

One of the keepers, who came down in the morning to help with the killed and wounded, having tied my birds together by their necks, slung them over a single-barrelled gun he carried, and I remember he bent the barrel in so doing.

It was seldom that we were out all night, and though, in addition to tobacco, we generally took a little something to eat in our pockets, we always found some kind of cold fixings, provided by the good old housekeeper, in the room on our return, which used to be at all hours of the night and early morn. "Well, Tom," said my cousin, who was our captain, one morning to a sort of buttons who was wont to sit up to let us in, "what have you got for us? What's this?"—pointing to a pie, which he took to be full of pigeons. "That, sir," said Tom; "oh, that's a damsel pie, sir." "Damsel pie, indeed; what do you mean by a damsel pie? Do you mean it's a pie full of young women?" "Well, sir, indeed I don't know," said Tom; "I only know as Mrs. Tomkins said it was a damsel pie."

Sometimes in winter, when the weather was what is called a regular ten-to-one-er, and when the ice was frozen into regular icepans across the various gutters, and layer after layer had been left by the tide

till they were piled up very high, looking more like vast sheets of glass than anything else, sport might be got by hiding under these; and the bernacles, being pretty much frozen out, like the London gardeners, used to be pretty tame, and would fly about to feed all day; but, unless there was snow falling or a gale of wind blowing, they were very wary, and seemed to know under which icepan your humble servant and his companions were stowed away.

Such weather doesn't sound very sultry to those who like sitting by their fireside, and I must own it was very cold work at times; but we were all made of pretty tough material, and with the help of plenty of the old-fashioned shag tobacco we managed to get on pretty fairly well. A certain Messrs. Williams and Jones, of Chester, used to manufacture the best shag tobacco I ever smoked. I really am almost afraid to hint at the quantity we used to smoke, but I have often wished that I had a pipe that would hold a pound, which used to cost four shillings. I had a real good head for smoking shag in those days. There was no such mixture known as Simonds' mixture, of 62, Piccadilly, at fourteen shillings a pound—see *Down the Road*, p. xiii—and

if there had been it would have been too costly for us to smoke in a real wild-goose wind.

When shooting in a real hard winter the effects of the frozen gutters were something hardly possible to imagine. From the tides leaving the pans of ice one upon another in these large kind of ditches, they were heaped up like the side of a house, or a high wall; and when the tide came in, which it often did, when the east wind blew, and kept it back at sea, it came rushing in, and positively filling these gutters six to ten feet deep as it came along, the crash that took place amongst the frozen sheets of ice was more like what would be caused by half a dozen Blondins, with their wheelbarrows, being thrown through the top of the Crystal Palace, than anything I can describe. You, good reader, may say "Bosh!" but I assure you it is a fact, and having seen such a sight, and heard such sounds, I am bound to say, "*Experto crede*," or "Seeing is believing."

There were not many that had punts in those parts; it was too exposed, and therefore dangerous, particularly at high water, for such slender craft. There was, however, one man who was a character in his way, and a good hand where wildfowl were concerned, and a yarn about him will not be out of place.

“Billy Duck,” as he was then called, was a Lincolnshire Fen man, and was, at his old home, known by the name of William Kemp. He was born in the Fens, not far from Boston, was a dapper little fellow to look at, had an eye like a hawk, was as cunning as a weazel, a real sportsman in the duck and widgeon line, was a sort of amphibious animal, and was, I have no doubt, as most Lincolnshire people are supposed to be, web-footed. Billy, from his youth up, had been a gunner. His father was a gunner, and every one of the name of Kemp was a gunner, and so long as the Fens remained they made what is called an honest livelihood by gunning. But, alas for the Kemp family, the Fens were drained, and all the swamps and drains were led or carried into one large sort of canal, which is now called the Forty-Foot. The fowl which used to be there in great numbers began gradually to grow fewer and fewer, and Billy found that his occupation was gone. The ducks, &c., used to come from Holland to the Lincolnshire Fens, but, without swamps and water, they merely came in passage, and did not stop, and, as Billy said, they all seemed to fly westward, and so “I made up my mind to follow them,” and this he did, and brought his boat and gun by canals and any other mode of

conveyance that he could find, into Cheshire, and finally took up his abode at Parkgate, where he took a bit of a little farm, and there he pulled up his boat on shore, and was ready for all emergencies when wind and weather permitted him to get his little craft afloat.

He was the happy possessor of what is called a float, which is a flat, low-sided affair, much in the shape of a low coffin, sharp at both ends, without any kind of deck, and the sides certainly not standing more than three inches out of the water; and in this he used to navigate his own precious carcase and a gun, that weighed about seventy pounds. At the bow of this dangerous craft there used to be a pair of wings, or screens made of board, covered with rushes, which he could set open at pleasure, and which were so formed as to hide the punt from the birds. All this was very well in a Fen drain, or a ditch, but in any place where there could be any lop or ripple, I don't see how he managed not to get drowned. I never, however, heard that he did come to a watery grave.

I remember that when out one fine, still, moonlight night we were all standing together, deliberating whether we should go home or not, as the night was

too clear and calm for us to expect any sport. We saw a something at a distance floating down with the tide, which was coming slowly down one of the largest of the gutters. For some time we could not make it out. Some said it was a whale, some would have that it was the sea serpent, for in the clear moonlight it looked bigger than it really was. At last our captain said, "I'll bet my life it's Billy Duck; throw yourselves down, and we'll let him float past us." Accordingly down we went, and just as he passed we hailed him. "Holloa, Billy, that can't be you." "Holloa," said Billy, "it is me, though. Be that you, Mr. Richard?" for that was our captain's name. "Oh, dear a me, Mr. Richard, what a lot of geese there be up yonder, to be sure. I've been trying all kinds of ways to get up to them, but the tide's so low to-night I can't get anywhere within hail of them. Sometimes there's such a lot of water one can't do nothing, and now there's not enough of water, and one can't do anything. But what a lot of stuff there is up there, to be sure, Mr. Richard! I do wish as I could be tied to them there geese for only ten minutes, with a short stick in my hand, that I does, Mr. Richard; I could get some of them, I knows I could, seeing

as how they didn't fly clean away with me. There's more geese there to-night than there was t'other morning when I got that good shot—did you hear of it, Mr. Richard? I ought to have got more, but I had no fair play; but I got thirty of them, I did, and that wern't so very bad according to the circumstances, as I may say. I'll tell you how it was. I'd had a deal of trouble to get anyways near them, but at last I got into a gutter that I thought should do; so I bided quite quiet till the tide should lift me up to shoot over the cop. When I had got, as I thought, almost right, I peeped over, and there they was—oh my! what a lot of them there was!—and I was almost aboard of them. But I soon found that the tide would not lift me up high enough to shoot from the punt, so I pushed the muzzle of my gun on to the bank, and got it little by little, as I thought, to a right elevation to catch them when they rose. I looked over two or three times, and thought that they must have seen me, but they were feeding away from me, and didn't seem to know but what I was at home and in bed. I guess they was pretty full with feeding, for it was just grey of morning, and they had been at it all night. 'Well,' thinks I, 'I don't see as I can better it;' so I gets



up in the boat. 'Holloa,' says I, as I pulls off my old glazed hat and holds it up, and as they rises I begins to pull the 'trickle.' Well, blessed if I didn't think as I'd killed them all, leastwise I hoped I had, but when the smoke blew clear, there was a many of them down, and I picked up thirty ; and this was not very bad, was it—I mean, according to the circumstances—Mr. Richard ? ”

Bernacles would always fetch half-a-crown a-piece in Chester Market, therefore friend Billy made a shot which at all events would pay for powder and shot. They were very good to eat, and from feeding on the short grass, which was no more than half an inch long, there was no weedy or what ignorant people call fishy taste on them.

Ducks, widgeon, pochards, and such like sometimes taste fishy, because they feed amongst weeds, and along the shores ; but if properly roasted, and you do not eat their skin, a squeeze of lemon, and a little cayenne pepper, sets all this to rights. I could give you a receipt that would disguise a cormorant, or a solan goose, but I won't, simply because you are sure to say, “ I know a better one,” and if you don't find the lemon and cayenne enough, I recommend you to consult Bradshaw.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FISHING ANECDOTES.

“ *Oh ! by rivers, by whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals ;  
There spotted trout delight to play,  
And leap about on each May day ;  
'Tis there, with quick and eager eye,  
They strive to catch each passing fly ;  
Thither repair, and try your skill  
With rod and line these fish to kill.  
'Twill banish care, and will impart  
Fresh vigour to an aching heart.  
The rippling waters, as they flow,  
Will drive away dull care or woe,  
Will soothe the nerves, and will repair  
The feelings caused by cankering care.  
Then hasten to these rivers' falls,  
And hear the birds' sweet madrigals ;  
For there the trout delight to play  
And catch the flies on each May day.*”

THAT fishing is a pretty old institution there is little doubt, for Tibullus says, “ *Hac captat arundine*

*pisces*," and in another place he says, "*Hi jaculis pisces, illi capiuntur ab hamo.*" I suspect there are few amusements, or I may say arts, that are more sought after, and which engross the attention of many, than does the gentle art. If one can make out what old Isaac Walton meant to say on this subject, or what he wished to teach, one must believe that he was very fond of fishing. Dr. Johnson, who, doubtless, was a clever man in his way, was evidently not a fisherman, and is not at all complimentary when he says that a fisherman is "a worm at one end, and a fool at the other."

*" 'All fishermen are fools,' he says.  
Perhaps 'twas so in his young days ;  
And, because this old curmudgeon,  
Maybe, never caught a gudgeon,  
Or with line and crooked pin  
Once tried to take some minnows in  
And couldn't, he lays down a rule,  
' That every fisherman's a fool.'  
This observation, on my word,  
I can't but think is most absurd.  
Indeed, it is not every lout  
That fishes that can catch the trout :  
So cunning is he, and so shy,  
It is not every ill-made fly  
Will tempt him, but the greatest skill  
Is needful if you wish to kill*

*This dainty fish. Moreo'er, the day  
Must not be bright, old fishers say,  
But rather cloudy, and the wind  
Is best at south or west. You'll find  
In other winds, I know not why,  
The fish are generally shy."*

As the purport of this, my humble attempt to amuse, is not only to state what I have seen and done myself, but also to relate any anecdotes that have been vouched for by those who have related them to me, and who have allowed me to put them into my book of facts, with their names attached in their own handwriting. I will begin with a story of an eagle and a salmon, which a gentleman related to me some years since, and which, unless he had signed it, I could not, and would not, have believed. It runs thus:—

“EAGLE KILLED BY A SALMON.

“In the year 1848, at Morvin, in the county of Argyll, I saw an eagle perch on the branch of a willow tree overhanging a river, whose name I forget, close to the water. Astonished at seeing him, I watched him, and saw him make a strike at something, which proved to be a salmon. The fish, upon feeling his claws, darted off, and from the bird

having one claw tightly grasped round the branch of the willow tree, his leg was actually torn from his body, and I picked him up dead, his other claw still grasping the branch. Proceeding on my way the same day I saw a man, who had caught this salmon with a fly with the claw of the eagle sticking firmly in his back.

“(Signed)                      DRYALD McCAIG.

“*April 7th, 1851.*”

Another curious anecdote is the hooking of an otter by Archibald Grant, who was gamekeeper to the then Lord Ward, afterwards Lord Dudley, and I have no reason to doubt the statement he then made to me, and which bears his signature. He states that:—

“In the month of April, 1836, whilst fishing at Ballogie, on the river Dee, in Aberdeenshire, in a pool called ‘Pit Slug,’ I saw four or five different salmon leaping out of the water as if disturbed by something. On looking down the pool I saw a rise like a salmon, then another rise coming nearer to me, another soon after, and the next time I saw quite distinctly the head of an otter. He rose again, still nearer. I then threw my fly above where I thought

to see him again, when, to my astonishment, he rose just like a salmon and took my fly. When I had hooked him he ran out my line just like a fish. I played him from twenty minutes to half-an-hour, during which time he went twice out of the water on to the opposite bank. He then came across the river and landed on some logs of wood that were near the side. I held tight on to him, and to my disappointment the hook broke in the middle of the bend, and I lost him.

“(Signed)                      ARCHIBALD GRANT,  
“*Gamekeeper.*

“GLENGARRY, *April 2nd*, 1851.”

#### CURIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF A TROUT AT HOPETOWN HOUSE.

In a letter from my son, September 5th, 1876, he relates a rather curious freak of a trout, and no one seems to be able to account for it. He says—

“At the Deer Park Pond I saw a trout, of about a pound and a half, sailing about close to the side. I tried him with a fly for a long time, but he would not take; so I gave him a prod with the top of my rod, upon which he turned round and came straight at the top of my rod; as he turned round to go away again I repeated the prod, and again he turned, came

at the top of the rod, and then swam to the side; I then put my landing-net under him and fished him out. He was as black as a tench, so I returned him to fight another day. I can only account for his behaviour by his being much out of condition. Perhaps some one like Dr. Buckland can account for this."

I could tell many another curious story about fish and fishing, but amongst them I have picked out three that are as curious as any, I may say hardly credible. I shall confine myself to these stories, and proceed to relate anecdotes of sport that have happened to myself. I have been fortunate in killing some heavy fish in my time: in the Garry, near Fort Augustus, N.B., a salmon of thirty-four pounds four ounces; at Constance, in Switzerland, a trout of twenty-two and a-half pounds; sundry others in Germany and Italy of from sixteen to twelve pounds, and once in Scotland I killed thirteen dozen and ten trout in a heavy snow-storm.

Having, then, begun with the three stories related by others, I will proceed to tell of the big trout at Constance.

I was living with my family for some time near Constance, and coming across an old Eton friend there,

who was no less than Guildford Onslow, of Tichborne renown, I took a campaign about a mile from the said town, and devoted myself a good deal to the gentle art.

The grayling fishing was particularly good, and it was but seldom that I did not catch more than I knew what to do with, and the well in my boat, or rather a kind of punt made for rowing, was generally overstocked with them, so that we not only had more than we could consume ourselves in the house, but I gave them away, as they say, right and left.

There were traditions of very large trout about the bridge, where there were mills for grinding corn and such like, and the road from Constance to Schaffhausen ran over several small arches, where the water could be let on or shut off at pleasure. There was one large arch, under which, when the water was not too high, a steamer, by letting down her funnel, used to run between Constance and Schaffhausen; this used to occur at the time of the melting of the snows on the mountains at the top of the lake, and at that time there was not head-room, and I have known the time when the passengers had to duck to prevent their hats being knocked off,



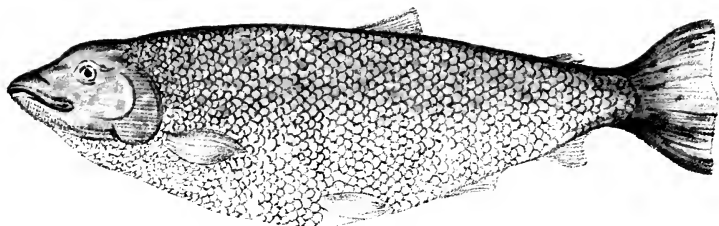
and probably their brains knocked out, by coming in contact with the beams that supported the bridge. I know I used to think it a most dangerous mode of travelling, and so I suppose it was. On one side of this large arch there was a smaller one, with huge pine posts, I may say trees, driven in against a wall, for boats to pull themselves up by to the lake, or I may say the beginning of the lake, and where it was comparatively smooth water. Just where the posts ended, and where the water began to be pretty still, there were generally some of these large trout lying; and as it used to be a favourite resort of numberless bleak it was what is termed good feeding ground, and I have seen many a time a shower of bleak, I may say a hundred at a time, spring into the air a foot high, looking like a shower of silver teaspoons, at the approach or rush of one of these big trout on feed.

Having taken good notice how the trout proceeded, I made up my mind how I would proceed, which was this: having put a large and well-baited bleak upon my hooks, and having ascertained that he would spin in real Thames fashion, I sat quietly in my boat till I saw a trout on feed, and my little silvery friends fly out of the water. I then cast beyond

him, spun it over him, and it was seldom that he did not answer my call. I own it was almost too much of a good thing to sit for two or three hours in the boat waiting for the "moving of the waters," for on some occasions no fish made any signs of life, and then there was nothing for it but to go home and wait upon them another evening—I say evening, because I never killed one of the large fellows early in the day, and I found that spinning promiscuously about for them was of no use.

Well! I was sitting one evening, rod in hand and ready for action, when up sprang a regular shower of bleak, evidently in a great state of alarm; my bait was over the place in a moment, and there was a rush at my line, a whirring of my reel, and a bending of my rod, that betokened something serious, something of the sort of feeling that would be caused by getting hold of the Scotch Express or Limited Mail. There were lots of stakes or large fir poles, which I have named before, hard by, and it was pull devil, pull baker, to keep him away from them. I promised him, whoever he was, that I would hold on at my end if he would hold on at his, and as he did so, I eventually got him into good command, I stuck my gaff into him, and was glad



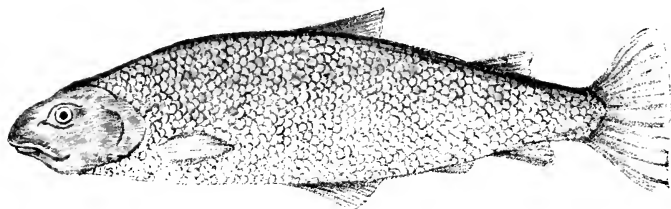


*Weight 22½ lbs.*

Length from tip of nose to end of tail, 34 inches.

Girth between first and second fin, 21½ inches.

Girth round vent, 15 inches



*Weight 17 lbs.*

Length from tip of nose to end of tail, 32 inches.

Girth between first and second fin, 19 inches.

Girth round vent, 13 inches.

*To face page 201.*

to see him in my boat ; and having taken him home in triumph, and put him into the scales, he weighed just twenty-two pounds and a-half. He was the shortest and thickest fish that I ever saw, and his dimensions were as follows:—From tip of nose to end of tail, thirty-four inches ; round between first and second fins, twenty-one and a-half inches ; round vent, fifteen inches. He was quite the most extraordinary shaped fish I ever saw ; he was as handsome as paint, as they say, and was in all respects a noble fellow.

This trout was killed on the 29th of June, 1842, and the next day, being my eldest daughter's birthday, we did him the honour of having him for dinner, at which he appeared handsomely garnished with flowers at full length on a board covered with a white cloth, having been boiled in the wash-house copper under the management of my courier, who said there was nothing else that he could possibly get him into. But, alas ! he was not a really good fish to eat, his flesh was a sort of cream colour, and not very firm as one could have expected. Had he been red like a salmon, and of the shape and make he was, he would have been the noblest of fishes ; but as it was, being over twenty-two and a-half pounds, he was, no one can deny, a noble trout.

I killed another trout of seventeen pounds, and another of fourteen, and I got hold of one which was, perhaps, the real great Levi-Nathan of the place, but, after having had him on for a long time, he got me round one of the aforesaid piles, and though I could feel him deep down, for the water must have been in that place twenty or thirty feet deep, and having tried all means possible to get him free from the post till it grew too dark to see what I was doing, I was obliged to pull at my line and break it, and leave him to his fate.

The dimensions of the seventeen pound trout were—length from tip of nose to end of tail, thirty-two inches; girth between first and second fin, nineteen inches; girth round vent, thirteen inches.

The twenty-two and a-half pounds trout was, of course, ~~the~~ handsomest, and his back was as broad as a large sucking pig's. The shape of the seventeen pounds fish was exactly that of the twenty-two and a-half pounds fish turned upside down.

There were others besides myself at Constance who used to be indefatigable in the pursuit of these big fish, and I know they used to kill some big ones, but how big I cannot say. The trout I caught was the largest I ever saw caught or killed in fair fight with a rod.

Below the arches of the flour mills that I have before named, there was a large piece of still, or what is called slack, water, which was supposed to be rented by a certain Mr. Betzerman, or some such curious name. His mode of fishing was curious, as he used to fish with a live bleak with a hand line; he never used a rod of any kind, but merely sat in a boat with this original apparatus dangling out at the stern, and if a fish, which sometimes happened, took his bait, it took him hours to kill it, and I believe on more than one occasion he has been known to have been occupied all night in this interesting occupation. He was most averse to any one knowing what he caught, and being as cunning as the cunningest of old weasels, hardly any one ever knew the facts of the case more than that old Betzerman had caught a big trout in what was called the *Kuchen Wasser*, which was sacred to him.

After I left Constance I went to Italy, and fished both in the Lake of Como and in the Lago Maggiore, both of which had good trout in them. In the Lake of Como I never killed a trout over sixteen pounds; they were beautifully shaped fish and were as bright as silver, their flesh was quite white, but firm and flakey, and delicious to eat.

In Maggiore I have caught them up to sixteen

pounds. They were unlike the Como trout, being redder than any salmon I ever saw, and so firm and flakey and full of curd that when boiled you could almost break them in half. The largest trout I ever saw there was in the market at Arona; it had been caught in a net by the fisherman of a friend of mine, a Captain Turberville, and weighed thirty-four pounds!

There were tench in Maggiore that I never saw or heard of elsewhere. I was surprised at my courier bringing one from Intra market that weighed eight pounds, and on my exclaiming at his size, he said, "Oh! if me had known that you liked him, me should have brought one twice so big. Him very full of bones, and peoples no like him much here."

A somewhat curious thing happened to me one day when I was spinning for trout in the middle of the Lago Maggiore. I hooked a fish which seemed to be a large one, and he at once ran out my line and nearly bent my rod double from making for the bottom of the lake, which was very deep. I hardly knew where he was, or where he was going to, when all of a sudden he jumped out of the water on the other side of my boat, and actually jumped into the boat.



I thought at the time I hooked him that I had got hold of a good-sized trout, but to my disgust he was only a *cepa*, which was a fish very much like a very large herring, or like a very large *agoni*, which is a fish peculiar to the Lago Maggiore, and is caught in thousands in nets as fine as a cobweb during the spawning season, and are delicious eating.

In the spawning season the *agoni*, which is about the size of a very small herring, may be seen on the top of the water in vast shoals, I may say thousands together; the fishermen know about the time to expect them, and are ready with their nets, which are of the finest possible texture, positively not thicker than a couple of hairs off a person's head, and thus they surround them with this fine and almost invisible net, and catch them in incredible numbers.

No doubt these little fish are much appreciated by the big trout in the lake, but except in the spawning season when they come to the top of the water no one sees them, and no one seems to know what becomes of them. Added to this their mouths are not suitable for holding hooks for spinning.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CONSTANCE—CHUB AND WELRER.

WHEN living near the lake of Constance it used to be amusing to see the little boys fishing for chub, of which there used to be quantities, including some very fine ones. They used to lie in shoals under the bridge, in a part of the river where there was very little stream.

On the bridge at this spot the little *gamins* congregated, and on a hot day in the cherry season, having baited their hooks with a ripe cherry, and holding their lines in their hands—they did not use rods—they would haul the chub up hand-over-hand over the side of the said bridge, and often caught a great many. To mention or give any idea of the quantity of cherries the boys would eat themselves is quite out of my power, but they would eat them by the hat or cap full, and always swallowed all the

stones, which in this country would make mothers anxious, and stand for sudden death, but I never heard of any harm arising from this custom.

One piping hot day, whilst watching these *gamins*, who, with their hats stuck all over with unfortunate live butterflies, impaled with pins, of every size and colour, were fishing for chub, a lot of people appeared on the road following a man who had something over his shoulder, which at first sight appeared like part of the hose of a fire-engine, and was trailing on the dusty road. On nearer approach it seemed to be a huge eel—an eel of monstrous dimensions, and of all the horrible ugly brutes it was the ugliest. “*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*,” as the poet has it. A most repulsive-looking fellow, of quite seven feet long, and they said weighed a hundred pounds, he was as black as ebony, perhaps a slight bluish cast in him, like a porpoise’s back, with a somewhat dusky white belly, a head as ugly as a toad’s, and as large and flat as a large otter’s, and from his nose protruded two long black feelers, fully a foot and a half long. So hideous an animal I never saw in the shape of a fish before, but fish he was, and went by the name of a welrer, or weller, and was caught in a small lake a few miles from Constance, called the Mindel See.

How the ugly monster was caught I never heard, but I suspect in some kind of bow-net or eel-pot. Having seen this beast, and having found out where he came from, a friend and myself made an excursion to the lake, which was situated in a pretty valley surrounded by rather swampy ground. The lake itself was not a very tempting-looking one, and the water was anything but clear, and anything but fishy looking. We, however, got the loan of a rustic's boat, and proceeded to bait some lines, and tried all possible means to get hold of the great Levi-Nathan of the lake. We sat for some hours in the broiling sun, fully expecting to be pulled in every moment, but no! No one seemed to be at home, or at least they were not hungry, and we did not seem to know how to make them so.

At last, getting tired of the business, we went to a small house on the shore, and were civilly conducted to where some rude baskets or eel-pots, made of willow rods, were set, and in them were a few small welrers, quite as ugly as the big one, but not weighing more than three or four pounds each. One of these we took home and had a slice or two cooked, but it wasn't good, being flabby and of a white transparent colour, and you might almost have eaten

it with a spoon, it was so soft. Perhaps we were set against this fish from his excessive ugliness, for his whole appearance was revolting, and enough to spoil any one's appetite. The welrer has something the look of the burbot or lota about him, but the latter does not run large, and is excellent eating, and though an ugly-looking fish, with rather a toad-like-looking head and mouth, he is a perfect gentleman in appearance to my friends of the Mindel See.

There was a mode of fishing in the Lago Maggiore for pike and large trout which I never saw anywhere else, but which at times answered well. It was, however, to me worse than dragging a bait spinning after a boat, and I considered it a most underground and stupid mode of fishing. It was called the *tirelandana*, and consisted of a long and strong line of from fifty to sixty yards, or more. To the end of this line was attached a bait, which never spun much, as swivels were not a product of the country. At about six feet from the bait there was a long-shaped light lead, at about six feet from that another, and so on, at the same distance, till there were six or seven, or sometimes even more, according to the depth of the water, which in some parts of the lake was almost without any bottom at all; and in this

deep water the fish in the heat of summer used to lie, and it was all but impossible to get a bait low enough down for them. Having paid out about thirty yards of line, the remainder was wrapped round a flat piece of wood, and if the hooks chanced to get fast on any obstacle, such as a stump or a piece of rock, the stick was let go, and the piece of wood floated until the boat could be stopped to try and disengage it.

I must own I never caught anything but perch with this underground article. It was far too monotonous for my taste to drag such a piece of machinery all day long at the stern of a boat; but the people of the country sometimes did, and I remember my boatman, when I lived at Laveno, coming to me one day and bewailing a pike he had had hold of, and which broke a single thin copper wire just as he was getting him up to the boat to haul him in. He had no gaff, and no means of securing him, and he described him as a beast of a great magnitude, but would not tell me how big he was, because he said he was sure I should not believe him. This boatman, who rejoiced in the name of Dionege Festorazzi, was a great character. He had been at one time in the Austrian service, and had been more than once in prison, and bastinadoed for insubordination. He

had, as he told me one dark night as he was rowing me home from fishing, killed two men—one in a quarrel by accident with a bayonet, and the other when in prison by spattering his brains out against the wall with a stool, or small wooden seat, that they had to sit upon. The man was a Sicilian, he told me, and as he tried to stab him with a knife, he did it in his own defence, adding “if you’ll believe me, sir, I am not good to do harm to a mouse.” It struck me that he was not quite the kind of fellow one would choose to row one home in a gunning punt on a night as dark as pitch if he had any kind of ill-feeling towards one, and we had come over four miles from the opposite side of the lake.

However, he was a good kind of fellow, and I never knew him do anything wrong, or quarrel with anybody. He was a thick-set dark-looking fellow, with a scowl on his face that might stand for bloody murder, but he was in reality good-natured; but of the curiosities in the form of human flesh he was about the greatest I ever remember.

As a boatman he was first-rate, and he would row away all day long without a murmur, but when out of the boat he’d do nothing else, and with a large pipe in his mouth would on his back lie upon a

wall near the house that I had taken, with his hat pulled over his eyes, till he fell asleep. And there he would lie for hours. If he had chanced to fall on one side, he would have fallen on to a hard road, about four feet down; and if on the other, he would have gone at least fourteen or fifteen feet into a small stony kind of rivulet, which was generally dry and full of pieces of rock and boulders, which had been carried down in floods. Many's the time that I have seen him lying on the said wall fast asleep, and have not dared to call "Dionege!" for fear he should start up suddenly and topple over into the abyss below. He was very fond of the wine of the country, though I must say I never saw him with too much. He smoked incessantly when not in the boat, and ate garlic and onions till he was redolent of these herbs. Of course, on a hot day, with hard work rowing, he could not but turn a hair, and on such an occasion he was, as may be readily supposed, a regular nosegay; and what with the garlic, the tobacco, the country wine, and the addition of hot boatman, the *tout ensemble* produced a perfume that would have defied Rimmel, Atkinson, or any other perfumer to imitate. It was a kind of *bouquet aux mille-fleurs*, and to cut matters short Dionege Festorazzi, to put



it in polite language, and without putting too fine a point on it, stunk like a polecat.

One piping hot day on returning from fishing, on nearing home, I took it into my head that a bathe would be refreshing. Accordingly I accosted the fragrant Dionege thus—"Dionege, voglio bagniar me. Cerca me un suga mano, Dionege." "Ah! buono! bagniero me anchi; sono molto sporco Io; me lavo la face ogni matina, ma mi lavo il corpo una volta a l'anno." For the benefit of those who don't know Italian the translation is—"Dionege, I'll have a bathe. Get me a towel, Dionege." "Ah! very good! I'll have a bathe too; I'm very dirty, I am; I wash my face every morning, but I wash my body once a year." "Well," said I, "you are a dirty devil, and I'd rather bathe alone." No wonder, after such a confession, that on a warm day he was a trifle foxey.

Dionege Festorazzi was, when last I heard of him, a great man in his way, and was steering one of the steamers on the Lake of Como. And after having been twice in prison, twice bastinadoed under the Austrian government, and having killed two men, he was at length living respectably. And the devil was not so black as he had been painted.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SCHAFFHAUSEN.—FISHING IN THE RHINE FALLS.

HAVING arrived at Schaffhausen, and having taken up my abode at the “Hotel Weber,” which commanded a view of the Falls of the Rhine, and from which it was not much more than a stone’s throw, on making inquiries about the fishing and whether there were any salmon there, I received for answer, that there were salmon to be caught there in the winter, but that till the winter came there were none or very few, and that they did not as a rule get up further than a place called Lauffenburg, where they caught them in nets and traps and various other engines which were set by the sides of the river, and into which they leapt on their passage up the falls there, and that very few ever arrived as far as Schaffhausen, where the falls were insurmountable.

For the information of those who have never been at Schaffhausen I may just say, that below the falls there is a vast pool, in some places of great depth, with a strong current, or stream, running out of it, and about one hundred and fifty yards wide. Across this there is a ferry, and a large punt, like a Thames fishing-punt, plies pretty constantly to the other side, and is propelled by one or two men, according to the height of the river, with great dexterity. For at times the stream from rains, or the melting of the snows on the mountains above the Lake of Constance, becomes very heavy and, indeed, dangerous, and it requires much strength, as well as skill, to get the said punt across at all, for it may at such times be termed a foaming torrent.

I found that the same man that provided the boats for crossing also rented the right of fishing in the large pool I have named. To him I accordingly went, and picked his brains about salmon and fishing of all kinds.

Pierre Huxley, a great, big, brawny specimen of the Canton Schaffhausen, with a huge red face, and arms as thick as most men's legs, which were browned to the colour of a pennypiece by the sun,

did not seem to give me much encouragement about the fishing. He said that in winter he caught a good many salmon with nets and spearing them, and showed me the tackle he used for the latter, which were simply very rudely made listers, or three-pronged spears, and much after the form of Neptune's implement with which he urges on his sea-horses, or the trident that Britannia holds when she appears in her war-paint on a pennypiece. He said there were not any salmon there until winter, that he never heard of one being caught with a rod and line, and fairly laughed at the idea of my proposing such a thing. He gave me to understand that there were some trout, pike, and grayling, which I found to be the case.

One day my eldest daughter (the late Lady Hope-town), then a little girl, came running up to me, saying, "Oh, pappy, pappy, I've seen such a big fish. I'm sure it must have been a salmon, it was such a big fish, and looked so bright, as if it was made of silver. I'm sure it must have been a salmon, for it leapt quite high out of the water." Having heard this report, and having been shown the exact spot where the fish had been seen, I took a double-handed trout rod, which, in fact, was what is called

a general rod, and I advise all fishermen travelling abroad to take one, as he can then make up a trout rod, pike rod, or a spinning rod, provided he carries an extra butt and spare tops. Having put on a salmon fly I set to work, and at about the third or fourth cast there was a curl under water, that said "By Jove, I rose him!" This I could never manage to do again; he rose that once, and only that once, and though I tried him several times, he would not have it. But he was there, of that I had no doubt, and I meant to have him. Accordingly, I came to terms with the man Huxley, and after a good deal of diamond cut diamond work, and trying to over-reach each other in every possible way, it was decided that I was to give him a napoleon, which I put into his hand at once, and was at liberty to fish away as long as I stayed at Schaffhausen. He seemed much pleased with the bargain he had made, pocketed his napoleon, wished me good sport, chuckled, and no doubt laughed in his sleeve, and thought what a d——d fool of an Englishman I was.

Finding that a fly was no good, I engaged a little man, who was one of old Huxley's fishermen, to get me some bleak, of which there were plenty in a certain part of the river. With one of these silvery little

fellows I set to work, and had not been very long at it before, by Jove, I was into him, and in event of time I landed my first salmon, and there he was safe upon the bank. Not as fresh a run fish, it is true, as if he had been killed within six or seven miles of the sea, but a very good fish considering he had come all the way from Rotterdam, which is about three hundred miles from the falls of the Rhine. He was quite red as to his flesh, and firm, and good to eat, somewhat long in shape, but not bad coloured, and as red as a fox, which some fish are that have been long in fresh water. In short, if I had caught him with a cucumber tied to his tail, which all salmon ought to have, he would have been a capital fish.

There were, as far as I could find out, only two or three places where the fish used to lie, and one in particular was almost a sure find ; it was, however, from being under a huge chestnut-tree, and close to a steep stone wall, somewhat difficult to fish. Practice, nevertheless, makes perfect, and I became quite a dab, and used to compliment myself silently upon the way in which I used to manœuvre my line under the most difficult circumstances. It was most intricate navigation, and almost impossible to

keep out of sight; however, when I had got quite *au fait* of this happy spot, I seldom knocked at my friend's door without finding some one at home and there was either a visible curl under the water or a tug that bid fair to break everything to pieces. Indeed I have been more than once broken, from heavy fish making a rush, in the cramped place I have named, and where it was impossible to give them the butt, which is so necessary, though I have read of people advocating the practice of holding the point of the rod down. To them I will only say, "You have missed your trade, sir. You cannot be a fisherman, and ought to have been a tailor." However, I have no right to dictate upon such matters — "*Quot homines, tot sententiae.*" It is, perhaps, a story I ought not to relate about myself, but from carelessness, or laziness, or neglect of proper precautions, it so chanced that in the cramped place named I was broken no less than three times in a very short space of time; I mean, as quick as I could put on a fresh casting-line or trace and bait my hook. I am persuaded that on no occasion, where there are fish of any size, ought one ever to begin before one's line has been thoroughly wetted. A dry casting-line, be it ever so good, is

not to be trusted to. Mine were good ones, of strong salmon gut, I may say extra strong salmon gut, but, from being as dry as tinder, they snapped at the first rush of the fish. Having been broken the first time, I never thought for a moment that I should get hold of another fish before my line was wet, but so it was, and again I rigged up a new casting-line and hooks, put on my bait, and the moment I began to spin my bleak, bang at me came another fish and away went my third trace. The traces had each of them three treble hooks to them, and therefore we may suppose that the fish, whatever they were, would have a pleasant time of it. They might have been pike, for there were large pike in the said falls, but I feel sure, by their *modus operandi*, that they were salmon. However, my negligence, if it can be so called, in not wetting my line before commencing operations, was the cause of my losing three good fish of some kind, and I firmly believe that they were all salmon, though I never got a sight of any of them, for the breaking of the casting-lines was in every instance instantaneous.

During the time I was at Schaffhausen, which was about three months in 1844, I killed fifteen



salmon, of which I give the dates and weights in English measure.

June	24th, 1844	.	.	1	salmon of	4 lbs.
July	12th,	„	.	1	„	16 lbs.
„	13th,	„	.	1	„	11½ lbs.
„	16th,	„	.	1	„	16½ lbs.
„	26th,	„	.	1	„	15 lbs.
August	20th,	„	.	1	„	8 lbs.
„	22nd,	„	.	1	„	14½ lbs.
„	26th,	„	.	2	„	25½ and 13½ lbs.
„	31st,	„	.	2	„	13½ and 6½ lbs.
September	5th,	„	.	2	„	8 and 6½ lbs.
„	7th,	„	.	1	„	15½ lbs.
„	9th,	„	.	1	„	15 lbs.

On sundry occasions I have been broken by salmon running me out a lot of line into the middle of the falls, and getting round or under something, I never could make out what. There was a tradition that a carriage of some kind had once fallen over the embankment that is near some iron-works, where there is a huge hammer worked by the falls, or rather a stream led from the falls. And another had it that there was a sort of wall or dam at the bottom, but sure it was there was something of the kind in a great depth of water, and under or round this my fish often got. There was no way of moving them,

and I have been more than once obliged to pull at my tackle and break it off, and let everything take its chance. As I have before mentioned there was a large hammer worked by a stream led from the falls, which was going all day, there being a kind of iron foundry there, where there were a good many men employed. It chanced one day that one of these men passed me whilst I was playing a salmon; his curiosity seemed much excited, and he stayed watching my operations with much surprise and interest. I believe he thought that I was a lunatic, and had escaped from some *Maison de Santé*. When, however, he saw me get my fish to the shore and gaff him, his delight knew no bounds; he jabbered away at me in German, the greater part of which conversation I did not understand; he patted me on the back and performed various antics that denoted the greatest satisfaction. I fully thought that he would have embraced me, which would have been a bore as his face from working in the said foundry was as black as a sweep's. Having seen the interesting performance of killing a salmon with a rod and line, he quickly imparted the fact to his brother foundrymen, who were constantly on the watch to see the Englishman fishing; and as soon as they saw me into a fish, out

they turned in dozens to see the sport. They looked as grimy and black as if they had just come from Beelzebub's kitchen, where they fry bubble and squeak for the devil's supper. I need not say that such a large party of dirty black-looking fellows was a nuisance, but they were very civil, very much pleased, and evidently very fond of sport. So there was nothing for it but to seem very much pleased with their kind attentions.

There were sundry trout also in the falls, but whilst the salmon were about I did not turn my attention much to them, and never killed any large ones.

I have seen much written about the voracity of trout, and there is no doubt that on certain occasions their appetites are of a first-class order, for I caught one of about two pounds whilst fishing at the tail of a mill on the Kennett with a May-fly, or green drake, which had no less than twenty-three minnows in him, of which many were alive when I shook them out of his mouth and throat. However, the story I am about to relate is still more unbelievable, but is a positive fact, and I copy it verbatim from my diary whilst at Schaffhausen.

“In the summer of 1844, whilst spinning with a bleak in the falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, I

caught a trout of about fourteen inches long. He was much out of condition, with a large head and lean body. I therefore, having cut a mark in his tail fin, threw him as far as I could into the water again. In two or three days after this, I caught him again, and threw him in as before—his tail was already marked. In two days after this, I caught him again, and in ten minutes after, on the same day, I caught him again. After catching him the fourth time, I took him up to the house (named Berbice) where I was then living, in my bait tin, and he was for some weeks in a cistern with my baits.

“Not only is the voracity of this fish curious, but the fact of catching him each time under the same stone, after having thrown him with all my might as far as I could into the water each time I caught him, is hardly to be credited.”

I may just remark in addition to the extract from my diary, that on no occasion was this trout thrown in nearer to the stone he was caught under, which was a large stone in the foundation of a wall, than from ten to fifteen yards, except the last time, when I sent my man, who carried my gaff, &c., to throw him into the foaming falls, feeling sure that no one would ever come across him again. When I caught

him I was fishing for salmon and not for trout, and each time I caught him I had a flight of three pretty large treble hooks upon my trace, so that he had a pretty good mouthful each time, and one which I should have thought would have spoiled his appetite and made him shy.

Many years after this my daughter, who had been the first to see the salmon and tell me of it when she was quite a child, was dining with her husband at the *table d'hôte* which overlooks the Rhine Falls, and on hearing some people opposite her mention the name of salmon, she pricked up her ears, and overheard one of the party say that there was a story of an Englishman having once caught salmon in the Rhine Falls; but that they did not believe that any one could prove the fact. It was, however, as she said to me, a fact; and if she had chosen she could have enlightened them as to the real state of the case.

Having during the time I was at Schaffhausen killed fifteen salmon, the anger of the old fisherman, Pierre Huxley, waxed strong. He said, "How could I do a thing that no one had ever done before?" The fact, I suppose, was that no one had ever tried. "Ah," he said, when I wished him good-bye, "adieu

monsieur, si j'avais cru que vous auriez pu prendre les saumons à la ligne, nous aurions fait un autre arrangement." The affair did not seem to me to admit of any argument. So on shaking his great mutton fist I merely said, "Adieu, Huxley, ne vous fâchez pas contre moi, vous m'avez demandé un napoleon d'or, et je vous l'ai donné."

I will just mention, ere I conclude my stories of fishing in the Rhine Falls and the excitement that was caused amongst my black grimy friends of the big hammer, that every week the account of my sport was duly announced in the Schaffhausen paper.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE EXECUTION OF CARL CADWALLER.

“*Ist das nicht gute gemacht?*” said the headsman, or executioner, as he wiped the blade of a double-handed sword with which he had just taken off the head of a man who had been condemned to death for the murder of his wife.

Carl Cadwaller, the subject of my story was a shoemaker, living in a small village not far from Schaffhausen, on the Rhine. He was not considered otherwise than a respectable kind of man, he had a wife and three or four children, but he and his wife did not what is called get on well together. She, from being once strong and active had from ill-health become weak and inactive, from being once young and pretty she had become old-looking, haggard, and almost ugly. The children, who were once neat and

tidy, were now quite the reverse, and looked dirty, slovenly, unwashed, and squalid.

Poor Carl, who in happier days was wont to find all his little comforts attended to, his breakfast ready for him before he began his work, his dinner ready for him when he left off work, now found all these little matters more or less neglected. His stockings were full of holes, his shirts without buttons, and everything that required mending was now left to take care of itself ; in fact, through his wife's ill-health he was no longer looked after as of old, and his children of whom he was very fond were sharing the same fate. What was to be done in such a case ? The constant discomfort of such a life began to prey upon him, he became downcast and morose. " The constant dropping of water will wear away a stone," they say, and so it was in his case, day by day matters got worse, and he was at his wits' end. The wife who was once his comfort had now become his discomfort, and turn which way he would he saw no hopes of a better state of things, her health would most probably not improve, and if such was the case he could hardly expect that she would be more attentive to his and the children's requirements, and the apathy and carelessness which had taken possession of her



would doubtless increase as she became less capable of exerting herself.

The prospect before him was a dark one, and being very nearly driven to despair, and with misery and want staring him in the face he made up his mind to get rid of her. Accordingly having made his arrangements and having laid his plans as he thought most craftily, so that his wife should have a certain part of a certain cold pie that they were to have for dinner, and into which he had put some arsenic, he on some pretence left home for the day, and on his return found the house in an uproar, his wife actually dead, and one of his daughters, of whom he was particularly fond, under the influence of the poison, from which she died soon after he arrived at home. His plan had been that his wife alone should get the poison, but, from some unforeseen accident, the daughter got some of the part of the pie which had been intended for the mother. Of course there was a tremendous investigation of this affair, and he was much suspected and almost convicted. No one, however, could actually bring any proof against him, and he was let off.

For some time he was in a very low and desponding state, and having taken the death of the daughter,

who was his favourite daughter, very much to heart, her death having been as it were caused by accident, he made the confession that he had poisoned his wife intentionally, and had it not been that the daughter had shared the same fate, he should never have owned his crime. Thus from his own confession he was convicted and sentenced to death. The sensation produced by this was immense, and every possible exertion was made by numbers of the inhabitants all round to get a reprieve or commutation of the sentence, upon the plea that he had suffered much provocation from his wife's conduct, and that she always had been a negligent, shiftless kind of woman, and had given him much trouble and so forth. The authorities, however, much to their credit were firm; they said that there had not been such a thing as an execution for more than twenty-five years, nor had there been so heinous a crime committed in the canton as that which was now before them, and that for the good of their country and as an example he must suffer the penalty of death. Accordingly, Carl Cadwaller was condemned to have his head cut off, and to be buried, according to the custom of the canton, in unconsecrated ground.

It was on a lovely morning in the month of July

that I, with two or three others, started in a carriage to witness the execution of the murderer above-named. We left the Hotel Weber, which is near to and overlooks the falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, soon after five, the execution being fixed for half-past six at a place four or five miles distant. Wishing to get a suitable place to witness what turned out to be a most extraordinary and solemn sight, as well as a most unusual one, we started earlier than was really necessary, and arrived at the place appointed for the execution a full half-hour before there was any great stir amongst the people, who were coming from all quarters to see it. The morning was beautifully fine, and the sun shone out in all his splendour, and seemed as if he was going to sanction some gay holiday meeting instead of the dreadful event that was about to take place. As we neared the spot we passed several peasants, men and women, and even children, all decked out in their holiday clothes, and dressed as smartly as if they were going to some fair, or other amusement. On arriving at the place of execution, a curious sight presented itself, and one which I shall endeavour to describe.

On the left-hand side of the road there was a natural kind of amphitheatre, with green grassy sloping

banks, in form exactly like the pit of a theatre, but much larger. Upon this were seated, in rows of eight or ten or more deep, men, women, and children, all decked out in their Sunday best; and with their blue and red dresses and white caps they looked most picturesque. In the middle of the amphitheatre, and within a few feet of the road where our carriage was stationed, there was a raised mound, from thirty to forty feet across, and much in the shape of an inverted garden saucer, such as flower-pots often stand in. Upon this elevation, which was about four feet high, with sloping sides to it, stood a large common-looking chair, made of deal or some other white wood, in shape like an ordinary kitchen chair; and a few feet from it stood a kind of pulpit, or reading desk, made of the same material. The appearance of the whole affair might lead one to suppose that some gymnastic or other performance of the kind was about to take place. The people were most orderly, and they chatted away together as if nothing of a serious or horrible nature was going to take place. In fact, they seemed as if they were met together to see some horsemanship, and were out for a holiday.

Having sat patiently for more than half an hour,

there began to be some signs that something more than common was going to take place, for half a dozen dragoons, if such ragged-looking fellows as they were could be called dragoons, rode up and cleared a space big enough for a carriage to pass from the road to the mound that I have named.

In a few minutes two carriages, or vehicles with hoods to them, drove up, and out of the first got two men, who were dressed in black. One, a middle-sized thick-set-looking fellow, bore in his hand a long green baize or green cloth bag, and with this he ascended the mound, and laid it on the ground, within a couple of yards of the white wooden chair. The other man in black remained standing where he had alighted.

As soon as the second carriage, which was escorted by two dragoons on each side with drawn swords, drew up, a person dressed as a clergyman got out, and after him a short, thick-set man who, from his pale and anxious face, it was not difficult to perceive was the culprit. He was, as may be supposed, ashy white, I may say, as pale as death; but he bore himself manfully, and walked with a firm step to where the man who had got out of the first carriage with the executioner, for he it was, stood. This man,

who was the gaoler and the executioner's assistant, proceeded at once to divest the culprit of his coat and waistcoat, indeed he took them off himself. He then untied his neckcloth and unbuttoned his shirt-collar, and with a large pair of scissors cut his shirt down the back and laid it over his shoulders. He then cut his hair quite close at the back of his neck to about half way up the back of his head. Having done this he led him up to the white chair, upon which he sat down. He then passed a cord round his body and the back of the chair, and his hands were tied in front of him by the cord being passed round his wrists with the fingers pointing upwards and the palms of his hands together as if in a praying attitude. Whilst this was going on the headsman took off his coat and waistcoat and, laying them on the ground, turned up his shirt-sleeves above the elbows. He then took the sword out of the green baize case and stood with the point of it on the ground and his hands resting on the top of the handle. The sword was a double-handed one, almost round at the point, and was what might be called double-edged, the blade being tapered off at the back though not made sharp as in front. It was quite straight, about two feet and a half in the blade and

about two inches broad. In this attitude he stood, about a couple of yards behind and rather on the left-hand side of the victim. When all was ready he took a kind of half step forward, made a sort of feint at his neck just to get the proper distance, the blade gleamed in the sun like a flash of lightning, and the head of the murderer rolled upon the ground.

There was no motion of the body in any kind of way, the only movement was as the sword passed through the neck the hands jerked upwards once and then remained as they had been tied together. There is a notion prevalent that when a head is cut off the eyes twinkle, the lips move, the tongue comes out and moves about, and, in short, that the head makes faces. Such is not the case, at least such was not the case, and I was so near and took such particular notice, from having heard such things stated, that had anything of the kind occurred I feel sure I must have seen it. The head fell off the neck as quickly and as inanimately as if it had been a pumpkin, and lay on the ground looking more like a large white turnip than anything else—for no turnip I ever saw could have looked more lividly white. The body remained for some

time sitting in the chair exactly in the same position as when the head was on.

On the sword passing through the neck and the head rolling on the ground the blood spurted up in a stream, I should say more than a yard and a half high, by degrees getting less and less and lower and lower, till it merely dribbled over the shoulders and then ceased altogether.

When the blood had quite ceased to flow the executioner's assistant put his foot against the chair and upset chair and body together on to the ground, and, taking up the head by the hair and holding it out at arm's length, pronounced something which I did not understand, and then put it, or almost threw it, close to the body.

The headsman then wiped the blade of his sword, and, with a kind of bow to those assembled, said, "Ist das nicht gute gemacht?"

The clergyman, or pastor as he is termed in that country, who had ascended into the temporary pulpit that I have mentioned, then proceeded to deliver a discourse, and having done this he got into his carriage and drove away.

A small country cart with some straw in it was then brought to the foot of the mound. The body



was then unbound from the chair and lifted into the cart, and the head being put in by the side of it, the whole was taken away to a field and there buried, without any kind of ceremony, just as if it had been a dog or any other dumb animal.

The people at once dispersed and went away to their different homes, from which many had come, as I heard, very long distances.

So ended one of the most curious and horrible scenes that can well be imagined.

During the whole of the proceedings the conduct of the crowd had been most orderly. There was no drinking or rioting, playing at pitch and toss, cracking nuts, whistling and hooting, knocking off hats, and such scenes, so disgraceful in this country. Before the principal actors on this occasion arrived there was a certain amount of talking, and what might be called passing the time of day to each other, but the moment that there was any sign of those who were to take part in the execution all took their places, and as they sat in rows on the green bank, in breathless expectation of what was going to take place, the utmost silence was preserved, and you might literally, to use the familiar term, have heard a pin drop.

The anxiety that was depicted on all faces was extreme, and there was no sound to be heard till the headsman's sword gleamed in the sun and descended like a flash of lightning on the neck of the culprit ; there was then a sort of suppressed sound, or moan of agony, which seemed to thrill through every one present. I did not see that any of the women fainted, which rather surprised me, for it was not much of a sight for women. One of the dragoons fainted and fell off his horse, and was removed till he got right again, which he soon did. This was the only instance that I heard of.

The sound produced by the sword was a rather peculiar one, and I can compare it to nothing but such a sound as would be produced by holding up a large mangold-wurzel, or an unripe pumpkin, and cutting it through with a large round-of-beef knife. It was a dull kind of ringing sound, if I may so call it, that was very peculiar and difficult to imagine unless heard.

The neck of the man was remarkably short and thick ; I do not think that I ever saw so thick a neck on any man's shoulders before or since ; I feel sure, however, that had it been double the size the sword would have passed through it just as quickly

as it did. The head, from being cut off in a direct line with the shoulders, and being so short and thick, had exactly the appearance of having been scooped out, and the appearance of the body with the head off was very remarkable. The man was a short, thick-set fellow, and without his head, as he lay on the ground before being put into the cart, no one would have said that he could be more than two feet long.

The executioner, who had performed this most important and unpleasant task most dexterously, was very respectably connected, and the office of headsman to the canton Schaffhausen had been in his family for many years, and was considered rather an honourable position than otherwise. There had not been any execution in the canton for twenty-five years, and therefore it might be a subject of wonder how a man who had no practice could perform such an operation with certainty and dexterity. The way in which a headsman gets his hand in is this. He practises for some weeks before his services are required at a heap of wooden plates or trenchers, much like those one has seen in this country for putting potatoes boiled in their skins on. These, of which there are about a dozen, and are about an

inch thick, are all painted white with the exception of one, which is painted black. Having piled them up at a suitable height, he inserts the black trencher between the white ones at different distances, and with a sword made for the purpose he practises cutting it out from amongst the rest till he never makes a mistake, and feels confident that he is perfect in the art.

Some of my readers may say, what a horrid thing it was to go and see a poor man's head cut off. So it was, but as it was decided that his head was to be cut off, and as my not going to see the performance would not prevent it, I made up my mind to assist at the ceremony, however unpleasant it might be to witness, and as I have always made it a rule to see everything that I can, I got as close to the scene as I possibly could. I was within six or seven yards of the chair upon which the man sat, and as I watched everything most closely I can vouch positively for all that I have related.

Having left the Hotel Weber pretty early, and having witnessed the execution upon a somewhat empty stomach, I was not sorry when the hour for *table d'hôte* arrived, and, though feeling hungry, I own that I did not feel very voracious. I, however,

sat down fully intending to replenish my inner man in the best way I could. I had some soup, and some fish, which I remember was a pike that I had caught in the Rhine falls the day before. I sat at the head of the table, being the oldest visitor in the hotel—indeed, I had been staying there with my family for some weeks. Monsieur Weber, the landlord, who spoke English very well, liked also to do things *à l'Anglaise*, and in front of me he put down a dish with a cover on ; this Monsieur Weber removed with an important kind of flourish, and there, oh, horror of horrors ! appeared a calf's head standing bolt upright upon a short stump of a neck, the ears having been cut off and carefully laid on each side of it, and looking for all the world like the head of Carl Cadwaller as I had last beheld it, so white, and ghastly, and horrible, that I at once exclaimed, "Mercy on us, Monsieur Weber, what made you put that horrid-looking head in front of me ? It is so like the head of the poor fellow that I saw beheaded this morning that you've spoilt my dinner for me."

I never was fond of veal in any shape, but this was such a clencher that I have hated the very sight of veal and calf's head ever since.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### VORACITY AND TAMENESS OF A PIKE—THE DEATH OF PICKLES.

THE following stories, though not tales of fishing exploits, may be interesting :

During the years 1825, 1826, and 1827, and indeed for some time before that, and when I was at school at Eton, there was a pike in a small pond at Barton Lodge, near a village called Wingfield, which was about four miles from Windsor, and then in the occupation of a Mrs. Birch, who was a grandmother of mine, and who, by the way, lived to within three weeks of a hundred, in the possession of all her faculties. The said pike had been put into the pond by the footman when it was quite a small one, and having been regularly fed became so tame that upon a certain sign, which was a wave of the hand, being made, he would come up to the surface and take anything thrown in, such as frogs, mice, chickens'

heads, and refuse bits of meat from the kitchen, and upon one occasion I saw him take a kitten, a live one of a month or more old, and swim about the pond with it, shaking it in his mouth, just as a terrier would shake a rat.

His appetite was enormous, and to try his digestive powers I one day collected a quantity of live frogs in a watering-pot, and gave him at one meal, in the space of about ten minutes, no less than sixteen full-grown frogs. His appetite seeming still good, I got from a nest I knew of five or six young half-fledged tom-tits, and having tied them together by their necks, threw them in to him, when to my astonishment he bolted them also. How much more he would have eaten I know not. We had, however, no more food at hand for him.

So tame was he that I have seen him take a frog from the end of a long pole. It happened one day that some painters, who were at work in the house, sent a little boy to clean a paint brush. The little fellow, quite unconscious of what was about to happen, stooped down to wash it in the pond, when, in a moment, bang at it came the pike, to the great dismay of the boy, who ran crying and howling into the house, no doubt thinking that the devil had got out of his

element. If any trick was played Jack, such as throwing in pieces of stick, or bits of paper rolled up, when he expected food, though he would dash at such things, he would be much offended, and turn sulky, and would not come to his accustomed call, or rather sign, for two or three days. A tench of about a pound was in the same pond, and though I have frequently seen them lying side by side, he never attempted to molest him. This pike eventually died from some unknown cause, probably from over-eating himself, and weighed between thirteen and fourteen pounds.

I have occasionally seen discussions as to whether fish can hear. To this I say, decidedly not ; for I, and two brothers who were at Eton with me at the same time, can truly say that though we have tried in every way to make the said pike hear, we never could do so. We have hid ourselves, and tried all means when hid, but have never been able to produce any effect upon him. That a great noise, like the firing of a gun, or stamping with the feet, will do it, there is little doubt, because either of these acts produces vibration, and all fish are very sensible of vibration. But "if fish could hear as well as see, the devil a fisherman might be."



BREAKING THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE  
SKYE TERRIER, NAMED PICKLES.

A noble lord, now dead some years, on arriving at his home in the Highlands, summoned his keeper to know how things were going. He had a lot of very nice Skye terriers, of which he was very fond. After having asked about the grouse and the deer, and whether there were many grilse in the river, and so forth, he proceeded to inquire, "Well, Sandy, and how are the little dogs?" "Ah! Weel, mi lord," said Sandy, "they're no dooing so bad neither. Peckles is no so weel, mi lord." "Pickles not well? I'm sorry to hear that. What's the matter with him? Not much amiss, I hope?" "Ah! weel, mi lord, I'm dootish about Peckles." "But what's the matter with him?" "Weel, mi lord, I'm dootsome about him; I'm dootish about Peckles." "Well, but surely you can tell me what's the matter with him?" "Weel, mi lord, Peckles 'll no doo, mi lord." "Well, but you can tell me what state he's in. Is he likely to get better, or is he going to die, or what?" "Weel, mi lord, Peckles is deed."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### BALLINA.

BALLINA, in the days I am speaking of, now some forty or more years since, was not the same Ballina that it is at present, I fancy. It was not so much frequented by fishermen and tourists as it now is, for the simple reason that railroads were unknown in those parts, and the Sligo mail and a coach from Dublin were the only modes of conveyance by which one could get nearer to the aforesaid town than Ballysidare, which was some thirty miles distant, and which distance must be performed on an outside car, or what was called a bianchoni, to me a most abominable one-sided crab-like affair, and upon which, from my hip being stiff from the accident before described, I sat most uncomfortably, and had as it were to hang on much in the form of a fly on the side of a treacle pot.

Ballina in those days was a capital fishing quarter, and the river positively swarmed with salmon, and it seemed at times as if the trout and salmon were actually playing at backgammon, for the river seemed alive with them, and on one occasion I saw eight hundred grilse and salmon dragged out of one pool called Pullamonach, and a friend of mine told me that the year before he saw eighteen hundred dragged out of the same pool. I can quite believe this, though I did not see it myself, and I know for a certainty that the gentleman I have mentioned fished a match with a friend and killed twenty-three salmon and grilse to his own rod in one day, and they were paraded through the town in panniers on each side of a donkey, who had been to fetch some peat from a neighbouring bog.

Paddy in those days was a more jolly, devil-may-care kind of fellow than he is now ; such a thing as a pair of trousers was seldom if ever seen ; coat, waistcoat, and breeches, were all of home-spun grey material, his breeches never buttoned at the knees, but invariably gaping open, with the strings hanging down and fluttering in the breeze, his hat was invariably of the most worn-out kind, and had the look of having been battered to pieces with a shillelagh, which was his

constant companion, and which was neither more nor less than a blackthorn stick, all over knots, quite straight, of equal thickness all the way down, and polished from use till it fairly shone again; it also always had the bark on, and was a real skull-cracker. It was a real dangerous tool if properly handled, and I have seen more than one sore head from the administration of it, under the influence of whisky.

I remember seeing two of "the boys" fighting in the streets of Ballina and bent on real mischief, when who should come up but the priest. Father Tim (I will call him), went up to them, and accosted them with "Come out of that now! What, are ye going to kill yourselves? What are ye fighten like that for, like bastes, and in the strates too? Come out of that! Give me that now!" and taking one of their implements of war from them, he gave them each as tidy a belabouring as I ever had the pleasure of seeing administered to any Christian. And they standing all the time in the most submissive attitude, with their hats in their hands. After having given them both a real good dusting, he dismissed them with the paternal benediction, "Now, boys, ye'll not be fighten in the strates agin, anyhow, mind that."

The poor boys, who must have been black and

blue by this time, went their ways, and Father Tim, turning to me and laughing, said, "Ah! the blackguards, to be fighten in the strate like bastes, and before a strange gintleman, too. Ah! the cratures, to be killing ache other in that way. Ah! but they're not bad boys at all, only they've had a little whaskey." Only imagine a clericus in England administering such toko to two of his pugnacious parishioners with a blackthorn as thick as the main bar of a four-horse coach! I question whether two rustics in this country, full of malt and hops, would take matters as easily as the two boys in Ireland did who were under the influence of malt alone. Perhaps the dread of Father Tim and purgatory had something to do with their quiet demeanour under such trying circumstances.

My friend Paddy is generally supposed to be much given to whisky, but I cannot say that I ever saw so much drunkenness in Ireland as I have in Scotland or in England. An Irishman, however, under the influence of the crather is a real wild fellow, and positively sticks at nothing. He does not care about getting his own head broken any more than he does about breaking his neighbour's; and at a patten or fair it used to seem to be a real

pleasure to have a broken head, or to assist in breaking some one else's.

I remember on one occasion seeing two fellows, that were much elated with whiskey, come down the main street in Ballina one market-day pelting stones, which they did in such a reckless and determined manner that they positively cleared the street from one end to the other in an incredibly small space of time. A troop of dragoons could hardly have done it more effectually. Every one cleared out of their way, and some of the shopkeepers, if you could call the hovels that contained the merchandise of that important town by the name of shops, put up their shutters and withdrew from the scene of danger. The stones rattled against the doors and shutters in grand style, and as these two worthies cleared the street before them the women screamed and yelled like very demons. "Arrah now, for the love of God, see that now! Ah! bad luck to them; them's the two wild lads from Crosmolena. We'll all be kilt entirely. Them's terrible boys for stoning; sure they'd stone a praste if he tried to stap 'em. Sure there'll be murther before they'll lave off." And so this little game went on for some little time, till at last rescue came in the form of three or four of the Irish

constabulary, who after a bit of a scrimmage with them lodged them in quod, and thus the town was saved from destruction, which at one time seemed imminent. I never saw fellows pelt stones like them. It so happened that there were heaps of stones on the sides of the street, which had been taken from the river ; in fact, pebbles such as David delighted to put in his sling, and such as he shot Goliath of Gath with, and which in the present instance were just the kind of article for what Paddy calls hurling. Wild as Paddy is when full of " thrink " he's a very decent fellow when sober, and one of his good qualities is that he is as a rule honest ; indeed, during the years I used to frequent Ballina, I don't think I ever heard of anything like stealing.

On one occasion that I went with some friends to Ballina to fish we were sadly put to it for accommodation ; the only inn that was fit to put a pig in was not able to take us all in, and, as we did not wish to be separated, and thinking ourselves all jolly good fellows, after much scheming we resolved to hire a half-finished house. Accordingly, we made our arrangements, got some bedding and other necessary articles, and took possession of what might be called the bare walls. There was a front door all in the

rough, with no paint on it, and no lock to it; there were windows looking towards the street, with no bolts to them; in fact, there was no nothing except the bare walls; everything was open to the public. Our portmanteaux served us as wardrobes, and except two or three rough wooden chairs, and some boards put on trestles, we had nothing that could be called furniture, and the whole affair would hardly have answered the description of "These elegant and well-furnished apartments," &c.—which in many cases stand for fleas and bugs, and creeping things innumerable. We, however, were all young and healthy, our teeth were good, our appetites were as good, and with our pipes and our materials after our day's fishing, we were as merry as sand boys, and though our beds were a bit hard we slept like tops. The only drawback to our happiness was the host of beggars that besieged the front door as soon as the brick that kept it from blowing open during the night was taken from behind it; for as soon as we began to show any signs of life every beggar in the town began to come into life too, and the dirt and filth of the old crones that then pestered us unfortunate sons of Isaac Walton, who, by the way, wrote the stupidest of all stupid books that ever



were written, in my humble opinion (excuse me, kind reader, if I am writing a pendant to his stupid production), was such as surely can hardly be seen upon any one but an Irish beggar. Such squalid misery and dirt may have existed in other countries, but in the town of Ballina, in the county of Mayo, it was rampant.

“Lang life to your anner! sure it’s a kind gintleman ye are, that would never let a poor widdee be wanting a male this marning! Sure, it’s yersel’, and the likes of you, that niver wants for anny thing, and lang life to yer.”

“Wilcome to Ballina,” says another, “wilcome to Ballina, yer anner, sure it’s for the fishing ye’r come, and Mick says ye’ll have great sport provided we’ll git some rain, yer anner; but the wither’s very d’hry at prisint, yer anner, and the praties is getting mighty shart jist at the prisint, yer anner, and if ye’ll just bestow a thrifle on me there’s a boat come with some lumpers, and sure I’ll go and get a male of them same. Lang life to yer anner! will I have a thrifle?”

Such stories and such scenes I could tell without end, such looks of starvation and abject poverty abounded in the days that I am speaking of, which were before the dreadful potato famine in 1842.

And I was there afterwards. But at the actual time of the famine I was in Italy, but after my return to England I went with a friend to Erris and there the graves of those who had died from starvation, and disease brought on by starvation, were everywhere to be seen. "Next to starvation," which is a common occurrence I fear in the far west wilds of Ireland, must be bad enough, but "actual starvation," from the failure of the potato crop, must have been dreadful indeed.

A friend of mine who arrived in Ballina, and who was well up in beggars of all kinds, knowing that he would as usual be persecuted the moment he showed himself in the said town, where he had often been before, had recourse to the following ruse to get rid of them. Having summoned the most importunate beggar of the whole crew, he told her that next morning she must collect every beggar in the town and bring them before him ; accordingly, at about eleven o'clock next morning there was such a crowd of rags, and dirt, and squalidness before his lodgings as I think could hardly be seen anywhere but in Ballina. "Now are you all there?" said he. "I don't see So-and-so! Where is she?" For he was pretty *au fait* of all the beggars. "Go and

fetch her. I must have you all here ; I can't do what I wish to do unless you are all here." "Ah ! lang life to yer anner, sure it's a kind gintleman that you are ; sure it's all the poor crathers that will git something this day." Well, having got all his pack together, and quite to his satisfaction, he pronounced the following : "Now, mind you all, mind every one of you, what I say—I swear by Jove, that I won't give any of you one d—— ; so you need not ask me ; so now you may all go away again."

This created a great shout of "Ah ! lang life to yer anner ; it's when you lave that you'll give us all something. I'll engage that yer anner will never be laving Ballina without giving us poor widders the price of a male—long life to yer !"

I remember going into a cabin not far from a river I was fishing in in Erris. Paddy and Mrs. Paddy, about a dozen little Paddies in all states of dirt and nakedness, "the gintleman that pays the rint," the cocks and hens, and a multitude of chickens, were all anxiously employed over their meal of potatoes. A large tub of them stood on a stool as I entered. "Your anner's wilcome," said father Paddy, "would your anner ate a pratie, if I'd be so bould ?" To this invitation I at once acceded, and

with a bit of salt I got on very well ; but the pratie was mealy and dry, and the salt was, like most other salt, conducive to thirst. "Have you got a drop of milk?" said I. "Milk, yer anner," said Paddy, "indade, and troth I have not." "You've got some butter-milk, surely?" "Was it buther-milk that yer anner said? Surely, the divil a drop of buther-milk do we iver see here." "Why," said I, "I thought you fellows in Ireland lived upon potatoes and butter-milk?" "In troth, and so we do," said friend Paddy, "but it's the praties, barring the buther-milk, that we get hereabouts." The poor fellow, with all his poverty, could not help having his little joke, and it was something akin to the story of potatoes and point, which I fear is a common dish in that out-of-the-way part of the world.

However, they all looked contented and happy. The elder children had rags on, the younger children fewer rags on, and some of the youngest had no rags of any kind, but were as naked as they were born; and from living upon nothing but potatoes, their poor little stomjacks were as round as oranges, and swelled out and distended till they looked like the little Chinese tumblers that children roll about the floor. Indeed, I might almost say that some

of them looked more like large humming-tops than Christians, so inflated were they with their unwholesome mode of living. For potatoes, and nothing but potatoes, is not quite the healthiest of diets, except perhaps for the "gintleman who pays the rint."

## CHAPTER XX.

### POTEEEN—THE REAL MOUNTAIN DEW.

THERE are very few people that go to Ireland that do not fancy it is incumbent upon them to talk about, and make their friends believe that their principal, or at least ordinary, drink has been poteen, and I verily think that they have in many cases persuaded their own stomachs that this has been the case.

Whiskey and poteen—parliament whiskey, as Paddy styles it—and the real mountain dew are widely different articles, and unless one has actually seen it brewed, or can thoroughly depend upon where it comes from, there is little certainty about it; the taste, however, to a connoisseur, is not to be mistaken. There is very little to be tasted in these days, simply because there is very little made. Illicit

stills have been so hunted down that it is next to impossible to get a dhrap of the real crather nowa-days; and the palers and the gaugers keep such a bright look-out that any puff of smoke coming from any quarter but a well-known chimney causes suspicion at once.

In the days long ago, when I used to frequent the Land of Praties, and, with my fishing-rod on my shoulder, poke my nose into various out-of-the-way places, there was poteen to be had; and a mighty pleasant thrink it was, provided that it was not too new. Parliament whiskey was hot, smoky stuff, and set your inner man on fire unless taken with the materials. On the other hand, poteen was soft and mellow, and had a pleasant taste of the barley of which it was made; and as it went down it promoted a most gratifying, comfortable feeling, such as the Clown in a pantomime doubtless has when, after drawing his tongue down the piece of bacon he has stolen from the grocer's shop-door, he expresses his delight and the satisfaction it affords him by rubbing down the stomach of his friend Pantaloon.

Difficult as poteen was to be obtained even in those days, still, in spite of gaugers, palers, and various

other innimies to a dacent boy's gitting a wholesome thrink, there were out-of-the-way places in which it was made, and no better place could well be than on an island in the middle of a large lake, and to one of these I will beg my reader to accompany me. This oasis in the desert was no more or less than one of the islands in Loch Conn. There lived upon it a family, by name O'Haran. The three or four sons of that name were as fine a set of young fellows as could possibly have been brought up upon potatoes and illicit whiskey. Their one sister, Kitty, was as pretty a girl as could be seen anywhere, with her black hair hanging down her shoulders, her blue eyes, her short petticoats and bare legs, and her linen accompaniments as clean and white as snow. She was a real beauty. The father and mother looked older than people of their age ought to have looked ; they were, however, to all appearance dacent people, and when we arrived were in a sort of back shed or cabin attending to the brewing.

The usual greeting of "Yer anner's wilcome" having been proclaimed, Paddy the elder began to explain his process, and how he was sure it would be a great brewing ; and how the last time they brewed it would have been something very superior



had they not been disturbed by the appearance of the palers, whom they saw coming from the shore in a boat, and who shot at them as they were taking away the still to the back part of the island to sink it in the lake, which, whenever they were surprised by them or the gaugers, was their only chance. "Yes, indeed," said the pretty Kitty, "they shat at us, the palers did—the blackguards!" "But wer'n't you afraid they'd shoot you, Kitty?" we said. "In troth I was nat afraid at all," said Kitty, "at laste, not for myself. Sure, they would not want to shoot me, yer anner. Sure then I was not afraid for myself at all; sure I was afraid for brothers."

"Did yer anner iver see a still at work before?" inquired the elder Paddy, "sure it's a great invintion for making wholesome thrink with. Sure it takes all to paces, just for the mightier convanyence of putting it in the lake when thim blackguards of palers come, bad luck to them."

I was obliged to confess I never had seen a still at work before, and certainly had never tasted mountain dew at its own home. The still was an extraordinary-looking piece of mechanism, something between a tin machine that one has seen in a kitchen roasting a leg of mutton, and a certain huge instru-

ment of music, with all manner of twists and turns in it, that one has seen one of the band blowing to the detriment of his lungs and the bringing on of consumption. Having assisted at the brewing of the said mountain dew I was naturally anxious to possess some of the real crather. Accordingly I made arrangements with one of the boys to land me a gallon safely at Ballina. This he did in three or four days' time, having made his plans with my boatman, and having transported it during the night for fear of the gaugers. A large stone bottle mysteriously appeared from under some turf or peats that were piled up against the worthy fellow's garden wall, and having deposited the price of the thrink, I became the happy possessor of a gallon of poteen, and no mistake, for I had seen it brewed. Well! having got my gallon of poteen the next thing was how to get it to England, for the gaugers and peelers, and police of all kinds, were everlastingly on the *qui vive*, and if they suspected anything were very unscrupulously and uncomfortably inquisitive, and asked unpleasant questions, and made themselves most disagreeable. I had got the said whiskey, however, and home it must go by some means. I felt as if everybody must know that I was turning smuggler.

And a guilty conscience made me fancy that every stranger I met was either a gauger or a hunter of illicit stills, but as I said before I was the happy possessor of a gallon of the real stuff, and *coûte que coûte* it must travel with me. I knew that on the arrival of the steamer at Holyhead gaugers were on the look-out, and were apt to ask passengers impertinent questions if they had any kind of suspicion. I own I was in a state of anxiety and funk at the idea of being taken in the act, but the possession of a gallon of such illigant and wholesome thrink as the father of the O'Haran family on the island where it had been made pronounced it to be, gave me confidence and courage, and I proceeded accordingly. My boatman introduced me to an old tinman who was in the habit of making and repairing anything in the still line, and from this fact could keep his mouth shut. I got him to make me a long tin machine, something in the shape of an old-fashioned powder-horn, with a thin neck or spout to it, about three inches long, to hold a gallon. Having filled it with whiskey to nearly half way up the spout, a couple of corks were fitted most artistically to touch the said liquid, the lower end of the cork being wrapped round with a little cotton wool to make a

soft surface, and prevent any possibility of clucking. This being done, the end of the cork was cut off square, and level with the top of the neck, and the whole secured with a thin layer of cotton wool well stuck down with sealing wax. This being accomplished the long-looking powder-horn was well secured in brown paper, and strapped up inside my great-coats and wrappers, of which I always carried, and do to this day, two or three more than I can possibly require. These being packed in a pretty long shape, on the top of all I strapped a wild-fowl gun which I was wont to take with me on my excursions down the river. All went well : I got all on board the steamer and off the steamer at Holyhead without being asked any questions, for from my long cases of fishing-rods and such sporting implements, I was taken for what Paddy would call a great sportsman, and not a smuggler of contraband whiskey.

On landing from the steamer, a shilling to one of the crew, and a request that he would take care not to break my gun, did all. And a hint to the coachman of the Holyhead mail that I had got some whiskey amongst my great-coats, did the rest ; he cautioned the porters to be careful, and "lay that parcel on the top of the mail, and don't get the gun

broken, mind that!" brought matters to a happy end. I got on the box, and, as was my custom in those olden days, drove off, and was greatly relieved in my mind when I arrived at Oswestry, for I had visions of gaugers and policemen pursuing the mail, and fancied that there must be a smell of illicit whiskey all along the road. I never smuggled before, and the jolly funk I was then in would deter me from ever doing the contraband and running illicit spirits again. I never could quite make out why, in the days I am speaking of, gaugers and peelers, and such like dignitaries, were so mightily impressed with an idea that no one had a right to carry even a bottle of whiskey, unless it had been opened. Such, however, was the fact, and I remember an absurd scene that took place on landing from the steamer at Liverpool, on my returning from fishing in Ireland. It is now many years since, and I don't think that in these days the Custom House officials are such brutish, bearish animals as they were then. In the days of poteen they were offensively sharp and keen and officious, and were no respecter of persons, gentle or simple. If they had a smell or the appearance of having whiskey in their possession they were sure to get searched, and if it was found upon

them, they were pretty sure to get what is called "nobbled."

On landing at Liverpool, on the memorable occasion I have named, the usual gang of inquisitive Custom House officers came on board. A most respectable elderly gentleman in a long blue cloak was about to land, when an official came up and accosted him with, "I think you've got something under your cloak, sir. Would you be so good as to let me see what it is?" Upon which he said, "Oh, I've only got a little basket," which he had on his arm, but in it, or rather out of it, protruded the necks of two bottles. "You've two bottles, sir. What have you got in them?" "Oh, it's nothing but a little whiskey that a friend of mine gave me just before I started." "Oh! whiskey. Whiskey is not allowed to be landed, sir. You must give them to me, and I must take them to the Custom House." "No, indeed, I sha'n't give them to you," said the old gentleman; "a friend gave them to me, and I sha'n't give them up to any one." "Well then, sir, I must take you with the basket and the two bottles to the Custom House." "Perhaps you are not aware," said he of the blue cloak, "that I am a Member of Parliament?" "Indeed, sir," said the gauger, "I can't help that;

but if the whiskey you have is not Parliament whiskey, it will be taken from you at the Custom House."

What became of the M.P. and his two bottles of poteen—for I feel sure it was poteen, from the guilty look he had about him—I know not, for I went my way, and I saw him following his persecutor to the seat of judgment. I was, I own, sorry for him, and to see an M.P. following a Custom House officer to have judgment passed upon him for attempting to smuggle two bottles of such wholesome and illigant thrink was indeed what is called hard lines.

There is little chance of my hero being in life at the present time, for he was in the hands of Anno Domini forty or more years since. Should he, however, chance to read this account, he will doubtless smile, to think that any one should have witnessed his discomfort, with the will, but not the power, to save or even help him. I was disgusted with the officious officer, unnecessarily officious upon the occasion, and thought then, as I still think, that he was stretching a point, and behaving needlessly unkindly in not allowing the poor old gentleman to have his two bottles, illicit as they might be, to crush his sugar in when he got to his own fireside.

You will, I dare say, think, good reader, that we have had enough of whiskey. I am writing this in a country where everybody seems to have had too much. I have seen a good deal of whiskey drunk in Ireland; but the love of it, and the drinking of it, is far greater in Scotland. In Ireland, Paddy under the influence of a thrap becomes elated, merry, full of fun, and witty; here the Scotchman, under the same treatment, becomes sodden, dull, anything but full of fun, prosy, incoherent, and generally resembles a person who has softening of the brain. I am writing far North, and I have wondered, ever since I left Glasgow, what can make Scotchmen so fond of what an Irishman would consider an unilligant and unwholesome thrink. There seems to be always some one that has had too much whiskey at an hotel. As a rule, the landlord has had too much; the waiter generally has had too much: for he, in particular, has every possible opportunity of getting too much, from this constant nips he effects from the scanty sixpenny-worths that he brings to the customers in the hotel, which, if not too much diluted at the bar, is sure to be pretty much whiskey and water before it arrives at the mouth of him it is intended for. In



short, there is a *cacoïthes bibendi* in all Scotchmen, and one only wonders how, unless their stomachs are coppered and their throats tinned, they can imbibe so much of what a certain learned Edinburgh physician called “heelee fire strang stuff,” without either going on fire or dying of spontaneous combustion. But I am getting too far away from the country and people I was describing, and though I have a little more to say of the inhabitants of the Emerald Isle, I will close the subject of Parliament whiskey and poteen.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### PADDY GOOD AT REPARTEE.

IT is so long since I was in Ireland that I don't know whether Paddy is as cheery and as witty as he was in the days when he wore knee breeches, and his whole suit made of grey frieze, which from first to last was manufactured at home. In the days I allude to he was always ready with some witty answer, and there was no getting a rise out of him : he was sure to have some answer ready for you.

On one occasion I had been away from Ballina to fish at a place called Bangor. There was a sort of mail car that ran into that part of the world, and was allowed to carry a couple of passengers, the driver of which was not expected to ask for or take any tip. On my return to Ballina, as he was a good kind of fellow, I thought I would be very generous. Accordingly I liberated him half-a-crown. This he

turned over and over, and at length, holding it in the palm of his hand, said, "Half-a-crown, yer anner!" "Well," said I, "Paddy, you've no right to ask for anything—you know that as well as I do." "Half-a-crown," again said Paddy, "why sure yer anner would niver be giving me half-a-crown for all that way? Lastewise, I mane, sure it's very little, yer anner!" "Well," said I at last, "you Paddies seem to be just as discontented as our people are in England. You must be better off here in Ireland than they are in England, or you'd never turn up your nose at half-a-crown when you have no right to expect anything." "Bitter aff," said he, "sure and we are that same, yer anner. If I was nat bitter aff in Ireland than I would be in England, sure and would not I go to England, yer anner?" Well, what could I say?—I was fairly beaten.

There were very few railways in existence in my Irish fishing days, but there was one from Dublin that ran to Mullingar. I got upon a car in Dublin one morning to join the rail, which was on the other side the Liffey, I remember. The car-driver seemed bent upon frightening me to death by driving my knees and fishing-rod case, and everything that protruded at all from that most horrible of all horrible

inventions, an outside car, against every car coming in an opposite direction. All of a sudden he pulled up within a few yards of the bridge, and getting off the car began to turn his horse round. "What are you going to do?" said I. "I want to go to the railroad." "Ah, no fear, yer anner, nivir fear, yer anner; sit still, yer anner. Sure it's only the mare that won't face the bridge; sure it's turning her round that I am; sure I'll turn her round and back her over; sure she'll think she's going the other way." This he did, and backed her to a few yards the other side of the bridge, when he again turned her round, and we proceeded in safety to the station.

"I'll engage I'd niver have got her over the bridge at all," said Paddy; "she'd niver face the bridge till I found this out, and sure now, as yer anner sees, she goes quite gintle."

This was a clever invention if you were in good time for the train, but if, as some people always contrive to be, you were late for the train, it might be a somewhat inconvenient way of catching it.

Paddy's mode of expressing himself was also at times curious. On one occasion, when passing a large white house, not far from Killaloe, I asked the driver whose house it was. "Sure, yer anner," said

he, "it's Mr. S——'s domain, but he doesn't reside there since he died, about two years ago. Sure, yer anner, does not yer anner know that that's the place where the coach from Dublin refreshes itself with harses?" How I should know, I don't know, for I had never been on the road before; but he seemed to imagine that as he knew everybody else must or ought to know where the coach from Dublin refreshed itself with harses.

A few more words of my friends of the Emerald Isle before I close this subject, for I own I look back upon my days spent amongst them with no little pleasure, for I invariably found them civil, obliging most hospitable, and last, though not least, scrupulously honest, and I can say with truth I never remember hearing of a robbery, or dishonest act. Paddy may have, and no doubt has, his faults, like other mortals; and the fact that he is in the habit occasionally of potting his landlord, or his landlord's agent, is a crime of a most heinous nature, and one which his naturally good feeling would not prompt him to do unless he met with encouragement from those who ought to persuade him from such acts of barbarity.

However, into this I will not enter, for it is a subject which has puzzled the wisest heads, and for

which as yet there seems to have been no remedy found. Whilst I have been upholding Paddy's good qualities, and bearing my humble testimony to the fact that I never heard of such a thing as robbery with violence, housebreaking, and such crimes as too often disgrace our own country, I cannot but admit that he is an excitable and somewhat plausible fellow, and under the influence of thrink is as wild as a hawk, and up to any mischief and devilment that comes in his way. He will fight anything, and thinks no more of cracking his neighbour's, or dearest friend's skull, than a monkey does of cracking nuts. He is such a good-hearted fellow as a rule, that he will go out of his way to please you, and if he thinks he cannot manage this by telling the truth and nothing but the truth, he will draw a long bow, as it is termed, and say anything rather than that you should be disappointed. If you are shooting, and wish to find plenty of snipe, he will give you such information as will make you pretty sure that you are going to have a good day, though perhaps there may not be one in the county. "Is it snipe, yer anner, sure it's a great country for snipes, sure, and ar'n't snipes as common as praties hereabouts; sure the country's jist lousey with them same." Of course, you having

made up your mind to be constantly on the present, and as constantly firing off your birding-piece, are not a little annoyed and discomforted as you sink step by step up to your knees, and sometimes to your middle to find there are none. "Not a snipe! Well, Paddy, how's this?" you say. "I thought you said that there were plenty of snipe here?" "Well, yer anner, and so there is plinty of them, lastewise, there was plinty of them same yisterday. Ah! yer anner, sure if you'd have been here yisterday, it was great fowling that you would have! Sure there were lashings of 'em, sure there was snipes everywhere. Sure, the divil a one of me can tell your anner, where they're all gane to this day! Sure, if your anner comes back to-morrow, it's great shooting may be that yer anner'll have. Will I be waiting again to-morrow for yer anner at the same spat?"

In fishing also our Irish friends are generally most encouraging, and I do really believe that there is only one thing, at least I have found it so, that will tempt them to forget the rule of *meum* and *tuum*. You may leave your money about, or any other property with the greatest confidence, the only thing that friend Paddy cannot stand is the golden pheasant topping feather in the tail of your salmon fly; the

sight of this if he chances to be a fisherman is often too much for him. I have no doubt but that he and the devil have a struggle over the beautiful golden feather, but in the end Paddy has to succumb, and if a chance offers he will often, I am sorry and constrained to admit, prig it—prigging and stealing though somewhat related are not the same things. “Bedad, and you’ve scutched your fly, yer anner,” says Paddy. “Sure the tappen’s gone, and was it not mysilf that hard it crack when yer anner made that lang cast. Ah! that’s a great pity now. Sure that was a grand tappen as iver I sade. Ah! that’s a great pity intirely. Sure yer anner’ll be having another fly like that, and I’ll jist put it on for yer.” Such little peccadilloes sometimes occur, and as they have happened more than once to myself I can vouch for their authenticity, and I have no doubt others that have fished in Ireland can tell the same tale.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### SKINNING THE SEAL.

“DID yer anner iver smell the like of Dinnis?” said Terry Divvers, who was my boatman at Ballina, and with whom I was just getting into my boat to go fishing one piping hot day in July. “The divil a one of me iver smelt the like of ’em at all. Dinnis, ye sowl, be out of that now,” says Terry; “sure you’ll niver be going in the boat with his anner this day smilling that how. Bad luck to me, but I smilt you coming a mile aff.”

The worthy object of this, as yet, unintelligible discourse had approached the boat, and, wanting a job, accosted me with “Will I be linding a hand with yer anner to-day?” The history of Dinnis, and how he came to smill that how, is as follows:—Two or three days before, Terry Divvers and Dennis

rowed me down in my boat, which in those days I kept at Ballina for the purpose of salmon fishing, to the mouth of the river Moy, which was a capital place for seals, and where I have seen a dozen or more together, at low water, lying on a sand-bank at the bar, which at certain tides was high and dry, enough to prevent vessels entering the river. When the tide began to flow and the salmon began to run up, the seals followed them, and upon the occasion I name I killed one, not quite as big as a donkey, but so big that it was all the two men could do to get him into the boat.

Taking advantage of the flowing tide we rowed back to Ballina, where we landed, and were soon surrounded by admiring Paddies, who were loud in their congratulations at his anner having killed the big sale. "By dad, that's a fine fellow," said one. "In troth, that's a grate sale," said another. "Sure, that's niver good for ating," said another: "but them bastes is full of ile, and you've only to bile it down to get endless of grase from it, and it's capital good for shoes. By the powers, it's a grate fine baste, however."

"Well, boys," said I, "when I've got his skin off you shall do what you like with him, but I want

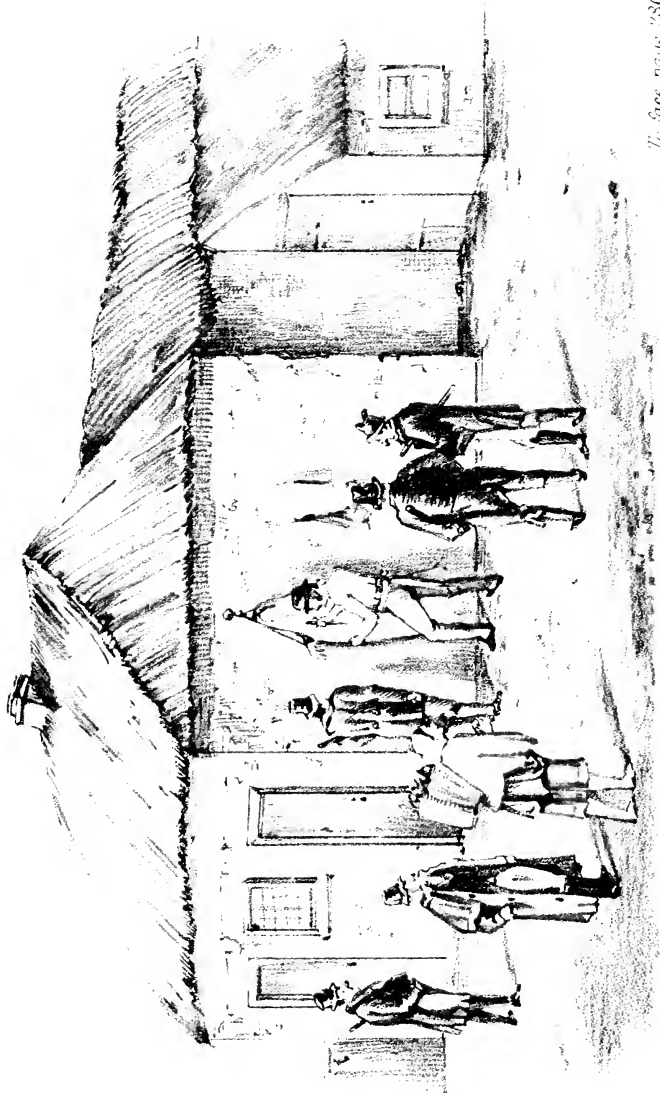
his jacket; so bear a hand, and let's set to work to skin him." Accordingly we bore him in triumph to where there was a ring in the wall, which no doubt had some time been used for hanging a horse's bridle to, or some such purpose; and having tied a strong cord round his neck and passed another under his flippers, there he was *sus. per col.*, and ready to be operated upon. "Now, boys, who's going to skin him?" said I; but, to my surprise, no one volunteered. "Why, he's worth the trouble," I said, "if it's only for the oil that's in him;" still there was no candidate for the honour. I found afterwards that there was some superstition about a seal, and that some tradition made out that the souls of old grandmothers, or some sort of old hag, inhabited their bodies after death. Be this as it may, no one seemed willing to skin the sale. Accordingly I blessed them all round, turned up my coat-sleeves, and having pulled out of my pocket a likely-looking, long-bladed, buck-horn deer-killing kind of knife, set to work. But, oh my! was he not full of grease! It soon saturated my shirt-cuffs, so I took off my coat, and turned up my shirt-sleeves above my elbows, But no! this would not do; it ran past my elbows and up my arms, till I could

feel it fairly trickling down my body. The occupation began to be decidedly unpleasant, but I did not like to be beaten, so I pulled off my shirt, and then I was stripped to the waist. There were lots of Paddies looking on, and I suppose admiring Paddies, for from time to time they laughed, and said, "Lang life to yer anner!"

I felt vexed at being almost beaten, and, in turning round to give them all a benediction for not helping me, I caught the eye of my friend Dennis, whom I immediately accosted with, "Come, Dennis, lend us a hand, you shall have carcase and oil and everything else, when I've got the skin off."

Now the said Dennis, be it known, amongst other trades, was a bit of a mechanic, and as he expressed himself, "Sure, a'n't I a rackmaker?" which in true English meant, "I am a maker of combs." Well, it racked my brains to know at first what a rackmaker meant, but I found that a comb is called a "head rack" in some parts of Ireland.

Now Mr. Dennis, from the fact of being a rackmaker, employed a certain small comb-making machine, and as it had wheels and spindles and bearings that required oil, it struck him forcibly that the "ile from the sale would be a mighty illigant



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"Come, Dennis, lend us a hand."



preparation for any machinery." So friend Dennis, not thinking any more of his grandmother, lent me a hand, and I again set to work. My fellow workman pulled his sleeves up, and at it we both went. The grease, or blubber, or ile, or whatever name it comes under, ran down my arms, down my body, and between the waistband of my trousers, till I was as greasy as if I had been in an oil pot, and Dennis soon became the same; it was a real juicy business; but he revelled in the knowledge that he was getting grase for his wheels: and the idea never entered his head, that if he did not change his shirt or wash himself for the next fortnight, he would be next to a *pot-pourri*, or some scent that it would puzzle even Rimmel to manufacture, in fact, a regular nosegay. After the skinning business was over, it entered my mind that seal might not be so very bad to eat; accordingly I cut down into him, and after going over my knife blade in fat, I cut some slices of meat from his ribs; it did not look at all bad, so I borrowed a frying pan from the inn where I was staying, got some pepper and salt and some lumps of red-hot peat from a cottage that was hard by, and making a fire on the ground we had a broil. I tasted some myself, and with a great deal

of coaxing got Dinnis to do the same. I own that the smell was beautiful, but the taste was not quite so good, being of the order of rancid bacon. However, I have tasted worse things, and a half-starved man might, if he was in a really good state of stomach, and had pretty good luck, have kept it down. Nevertheless, it was not quite what one would have chosen to make eggs and bacon of every day in the week. As lads, I and my brothers used to make a rule of tasting everything, and there were but few animals we did not try. Mice are not very bad. Rats about the same. Squirrels not at all bad. Hedgehogs rather good; in fact, if it was not for the idea of the thing, a hungry man might eat and even enjoy any of the aforesaid. The only thing that ever fairly beat us was fox. When out with the Cottesmore hounds, we got Lambert, who was then first whip, to cut out the fox's tongue for us. We had it boiled, and put hot on the table at luncheon. It was one of the prettiest little red tongues that ever was seen; but eating it was out of the question; and when the cover was taken off, Tally ho! it was simply enough to make one sneeze. But *revenous à nos moutons*, or rather to our seal, which, having been stripped of his jacket



and tasted, became the property of Dennis, who took it home and duly boiled it down for the grease, of which, as he described it to me afterwards, "there was a big lump of it."

Immediately after the interesting operations were over, I repaired to the inn, and with the help of hot water and scouring soap cleaned myself, and managed to get pretty sweet again, and with a clean shirt, and a change of everything that had come in contact with our oily friend, I was as good as new again. But Dennis, to whom soap and water was as unknown as a clean shirt, or clean anything else, had to remain in his oily state till the oil wore off him through time. And thus, in about three days after the skinning of the big sale, from the heat of the weather and the unwashed state of his miserable carcase and clothes, the poor devil began to be a little rancid, and as Trinculo says in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, when he stoops down and smells at Caliban, there was not only a considerable smell "not of the newest Poor-John" about him, but also "an ancient and a fish-like smell," which called forth Terry Divver's observations, "Did yer anner iver smill the like of Dinnis? Dinnis, ye sowl, be out of that now ; sure you'll niver be going in the

boat, with his anner, smiling that how ? ” How long poor Dinnis continued to smill that how I do not know, but during the time I was at Ballina he never got over having skinned and tasted seal, and he was for ever being roasted with, “ Ah, Dinnis now, didn’t his anner make you skin and ate your grandmother ? ”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### SEAL EATING A SALMON.

“AROON ! Aroon !” said Mick Rowan, who with Terry Divvers and myself were floating down the river Moy with the tide, and just coming in sight of the bar, upon which several seals were lying basking. “Them’s big bastes, anywise,” said Terry ; “sure they’re waiting to come up after the salmons when the tide turns,” said Mick ; “I’ll engage there’ll be a great run of salmon this tide, or thim gintlemen would not be there, and won’t they make them lape out of the water !” “Sure, Mick,” says Terry, “you’ll mind the salmon ating the sale, and holding him under his arm ?” “What do you mean, Terry,” said I, “by a salmon eating a seal and holding him under his arm ?” “Ah, nat at all,” said Terry, “sure I meant a sale ating a salmon, and holding him under his arm ; sure I’ve say’d him do it more than once.”

“Well,” said I, “Terry, I’ve heard that Irishmen can sometimes tell a lie if required, but I never heard of any one telling so big a one as you can.” “Sure it’s truth I’m tilling your anner,” said Terry, “sure it’s no lie at all, at all. Did yer anner iver know Terry till a lie? sure yer anner might say the same yoursel, and thin it’s bilaving Terry Divvers that you’d be. Sure and I’d not be surprised that you say’d it this day.”

I had my rifle on board the boat, but being curious to see the seals chasing the salmon, instead of going to the bar and disturbing them, I had the boat moored alongside a small kind of island, and there we awaited the turn of the tide. Our friends on the bar soon took to the water, and evidently began their fishing, for the salmon or grilse, or salmon and grilse—for there were plenty of each—springing out of the water in all directions; and as Terry expressed it, “The divil such loping was iver seen.”

I was beginning to be tired of waiting, and having my rifle felt much inclined to heave some boluses at the said seals. I, however, desisted, and having waited so long on purpose to see a seal come up with a salmon under his arm, I contented myself with chaffing Terry and smoking an endless number

of pipes of shag tobacco. I'd a capital strong head for baccy in those days, and light mixtures and such like elegant compositions were hardly known. But a short clay pipe, or what was called a duddeen, with shag tobacco or twist, which latter all the Paddies used to smoke, and which was always so damp that it would never keep alight, was the only smoke one could get, unless one was a real swell, and smoked cigars. "Say that big fellow?" said Terry, as he pointed to a grey-headed old seal, "how he's making them fly about!" Up he came, and then down again, and was evidently fishing in the most approved style.

All of a sudden there was a most excited shout from Terry, "Ah! the sale! Say the sale, say the sale ating the salmon!" And positively, believe it who can that has not seen it, there was a seal who seemed to be almost standing up in the water with a grilse of six or eight pounds firmly grasped under his flipper, and putting down his head and regularly eating it.

"Did yer anner iver say the like of that, now?" said friend Terry. "Sure I was thinking we'd niver say him getting his dinner at all this day. Sure, yer anner will belave that now, anyway! Sure yer anner say'd it yoursel! Sure yer anner would not have

beloved poor Terry, but Terry's not the boy that iver told his anner a lie." I own I was astonished to find Terry's story come true, and at seeing myself what I could hardly have believed.

I have often caught salmon with evident marks of having been severely handled upon them, and there is no doubt in my mind but that the marks I have often noticed have been from having been held and clapper-clawed by a seal. No net or other engine that I know of could produce the same kind of marks which have evidently been made by a seal's flipper, which is a most powerful machine of its kind, and when skinned is exactly like a man's hand.

#### SEAL AND YOUNG ONE.

I remember on one occasion whilst staying with a friend at a place called Gowla, in Erris, for fishing, the weather being very hot, and the sun's perpendicular height being too hot for fishing, I took a boat and proceeded with my servant to some deserted islands in hopes of finding a seal. The islands had been inhabited before the terrible potato famine, which pretty nearly exterminated the race of Irishmen on that bleak and rocky shore.

Having pulled off to a rather large island on which there were some habitations, but which at the time I am speaking of were roofless and desolate in the extreme, we saw visible signs of otters having frequented it, so having sent the faithful Paddy, to whom the boat belonged, away to a small island that was within hail, I and my servant lay down to watch for any otter or seal that might show himself. I frequently saw a seal evidently wishing to land on a rock, and accordingly crept round and got on a piece of high ground which overlooked and was within shot of the rock in question; having lain down flat, and rifle in hand, I awaited the landing of the enemy.

I lay there until I was fairly tired out, and my miserable stomach seemed stuck to the rock below, and to my backbone above. I was giving matters up in despair, and was on the point of trying to raise myself, for I felt fairly glued down, when up popped a great grey head and a little black one no bigger than a cricket ball beside it—aroon, mamma, and her little aroon, baby.

It was the prettiest sight I ever saw. I took my finger off the trigger of my rifle and watched them till I thought I should have died from the pain I

was in from having lain so long on my wretched "stomjack." They seemed quite unaware that I was so near at hand, and they played about in the most interesting and confiding manner. The little seal at times rolling over the old one, and the old one performing all kinds of endearing antics, rolling over and over, and in fact playing like kittens. At last the old grey mother came up on the rock and, with the little one by her side, lay within ten yards of me high and dry. There they lay with their tails cocking up and down in the absurd way that any one acquainted with the habits of seals must have observed. Then again they would lie as motionless as if they were part of the rock for a long time. And though the old mother occasionally turned her head and kept her weather eye open to see that all was serene, they seemed to be perfectly unconscious that there was any living animal but themselves in existence. What a beautiful soft eye a seal has! and what a wonder it was that such an eye should not have noticed me and the deadly weapon that lay by my side!

It was a lucky thing for mother aroon and her baby that I had learnt manners in my youth, for my double Lancaster rifle was a deadly weapon, and



there would have been no question of my splitting her skull at the short distance I was from them both ; but the thoughts of the childless mother and the motherless child, and the lessons I had learnt about doing no murder, forbad my pulling the trigger.

I was in perfect agony from having watched them so long in one position, motionless, and without even blinking an eye. So at last, raising myself a little, I accosted the old lady with " Halloa, missus ! do you know what a scrape you might have been in ? " Their confusion at such an effusion was perfect, and with one bound, or something between a bound and a roll, off they both went headlong into the water, and, as far as I know, never came up again, for I never saw any more of them. Altogether my sojourn on the rock, which was higher by some feet than that upon which the seals lay, was most interesting, and I suspect that very few have ever been for so long a time in such proximity to two seals, for at times I could actually hear the old one breathe, and the noises the little seal made were very curious, as it rubbed its little nose against and fondled its mother.

The aroon family having departed, and having

got my unfortunate ribs into a more comfortable state by standing up, I returned to where I had left my servant, who was beginning to wonder what had become of me. On asking him whether he had seen anything, he informed me that he fancied he had seen the head of an otter, or the head of some beast, peeping out from between two pieces of stone. Accordingly I determined to watch a bit, and though I had had a pretty good dose of watching with the seals in question, I lay down with my servant close to me.

It was a fine evening, and beginning to be inclined to be a little dusk. A slight poke from my companion told that something was on the move, and there I saw coming along the shingle the father of all the rats, such a rat as I never had seen before; then came another almost as big; such long, grey, half-starved, hungry-looking devils I never saw, with tails, of all tails I ever heard of on any rats, the longest and the thickest; they seemed too long and too heavy for their lean bodies, and they trailed them on the ground as if they had not the strength left in them to carry them. In fact, they looked more like small kangaroos on all fours than rats. They were evidently on the look-out for something

to eat, and were most inquisitive, turning over all the old crab-shells and other shells that had been washed up by the tide, and peeping and poking their long, lean, hungry noses into everything they came near. They looked as if, had there been plenty of them, we might have shared the fate of Bishop Hatto in his castle on the Rhine.

And now, good reader, having told of killing and skinning and eating seals; of Ballina and its inhabitants; and them wild boys from Crosmolina, hurling stones, and bad luck to them; the brewing of poteen, and my successful transporting of the same to England; having paid my small tribute to Paddy's honesty, and my regret to think that such good boys at heart, by nature, should be led away to pot landlords, and engage in other nefarious practices; I will, in conclusion, say—

*“Farewell to its fields decked with emerald green,  
Farewell to old Ireland, the land of poteen.”*

It is true that many years have elapsed since the anecdotes I have related took place; but they all come as vividly before my eyes as if they had happened only yesterday. I was then young and full of go; and though crippled by a stiff hip from

my accident, I could enjoy everything except riding, for I then suffered no pain, and was up to everything, from pitch and toss to manslaughter. Lying out in gunning punts and such like proceedings have I fear not conduced much to my comforts, as I now suffer terribly from rheumatism and such like discomforts. I love, however, to look back on younger and happier days, and I still delight to sing—

*“Oh sing me the songs which to me were so dear,  
Long, long ago. Long ago.”*

and am constrained to exclaim with our old friend, Horace—

*“Eheu! fugaces, Posthume, Posthume  
Labuntur anni.”*

THE END.

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